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by J. P. Jacobsen**

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MOGENS AND OTHER STORIES

(1882)

By Jens Peter Jacobsen

(1847-1885)

Translated from the Danish By Anna Grabow

(1921)

Contents

INTRODUCTION

In the decade from 1870 to 1880 a new spirit was stirring in the intellectual and literary world of Denmark. George Brandes was delivering his lectures on the *Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature*; from Norway came the deeply probing questionings of the granitic Ibsen; from across the North Sea from England echoes of the evolutionary theory and Darwinism. It was a time of controversy and bitterness, of a conflict joined between the old and the new, both going to extremes, in which nearly every one had a share. How many of the works of that period are already out-worn, and how old-fashioned the theories that were then so violently defended and attacked! Too much logic, too much contention for its own sake, one might say, and too little art.

This was the period when Jens Peter Jacobsen began to write, but he stood aside from the conflict, content to be merely artist, a creator of beauty and a seeker after truth, eager to bring into the realm of literature "the eternal laws of nature, its glories, its riddles, its miracles," as he once put it. That is why his work has retained its living colors until to-day, without the least trace of fading.

There is in his work something of the passion for form and style that one finds in Flaubert and Pater, but where they are often hard, percussive, like a piano, he is soft and strong and intimate like a violin on which he plays his reading of life. Such analogies, however, have little significance, except that they indicate a unique and powerful artistic personality.

Jacobsen is more than a mere stylist. The art of writers who are too consciously that is a sort of decorative representation of life, a formal composition, not a plastic composition. One element particularly characteristic of Jacobsen is his accuracy of observation and minuteness of detail welded with a deep and intimate understanding of the human heart. His characters are not studied tissue by tissue as under a scientist's microscope, rather they are built up living cell by living cell out of the author's experience and imagination. He shows how they are conditioned and modified by their physical being, their inheritance and environment, Through each of his senses he lets impressions from without pour into him. He harmonizes them with a passionate desire for beauty into marvelously plastic figures and moods. A style which grows thus organically from within is style out of richness; the other is style out of poverty.

In a letter he once stated his belief that every book to be of real value must embody the struggle of one or more persons against all those things which try to keep one from existing in one's own way. That is the fundamental ethos which runs through all of Jacobsen's work. It is in Marie Grubbe, Niels Lyhne, Mogens, and the infinitely tender Mrs. Fonss.

They are types of the kind he has described in the following passage: "Know ye not that there is here in this world a secret confraternity, which one might call the Company of Melancholiacs? That people there are who by natural constitution have been given a different nature and disposition than the others; that have a larger heart and a swifter blood, that wish and demand more, have stronger desires and a yearning which is wilder and more ardent than that of the common herd. They are fleet as children over whose birth good fairies have presided; their eyes are opened wider; their senses are more subtile in all their perceptions. The gladness and joy of life, they drink with the roots of their heart, the while the others merely grasp them with coarse hands."

He himself was one of these, and in this passage his own art and personality is described better than could be done in thousands of words of commentary.

Jens Peter Jacobsen was born in the little town of Thisted in Jutland, on April 7, 1847. In 1868 he matriculated at the University of Copenhagen, where he displayed a remarkable talent for science, winning the gold medal of the university with a dissertation on Seaweeds. He definitely chose science as a career, and was among the first in Scandinavia to recognize the importance of Darwin. He translated the Origin of Species and Descent of Man into Danish. In 1872 while collecting plants he contracted tuberculosis, and as a consequence, was compelled to give up his scientific career. This was not as great a sacrifice, as it may seem, for he had long been undecided whether to choose science or literature as his life work.

The remainder of his short life—he died April 30, 1885—was one of passionate devotion to literature and a constant struggle with ill health. The greater part of this period was spent in his native town of Thisted, but an advance royalty from his publisher enabled him to visit the South of Europe. His journey was interrupted at Florence by a severe hemorrhage.

He lived simply, unobtrusively, bravely. His method of work was slow and laborious. He shunned the literary circles of the capital with their countless intrusions and interruptions, because he knew that the time allotted him to do his work was short. "When life has sentenced you to suffer," he has written in Niels Lyhne, "the sentence is neither a fancy nor a threat, but you are dragged to the rack, and you are tortured, and there is no marvelous rescue at the last moment," and in this book there is also a corollary, "It is on the healthy in you you must live, it is the healthy that becomes great." The realization of the former has given, perhaps, a subdued tone to his canvasses; the recognition of the other has kept out of them weakness or self-pity.

Under the encouragement of George Brandes his novel Marie Grubbe was begun in 1873, and published in 1876. His other novel Niels Lyhne appeared in 1880. Excluding his early scientific works, these two books together with a collection of short stories, Mogens and Other Tales, published in 1882, and a posthumous volume of poems, constitute Jacobsen's literary testament. The present volume contains Mogens, the story with which he made his literary debut, and other characteristic stories.

The physical measure of Jacobsen's accomplishment was not great, but it was an important milestone in northern literature. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in so far as Scandinavia is concerned he created a new method of literary approach and a new artistic prose. There is scarcely a writer in these countries, since 1880, with any pretension toward literary expression who has not directly or indirectly come under Jacobsen's influence.

O. F. THEIS.

MOGENS

SUMMER it was; in the middle of the day; in a corner of the enclosure. Immediately in front of it stood an old oaktree, of whose trunk one might say, that it agonized in despair because of the lack of harmony between its fresh yellowish foliage and its black and gnarled branches; they resembled most of all grossly misdrawn old gothic arabesques. Behind the oak was a luxuriant thicket of hazel with dark sheenless leaves, which were so dense, that neither trunk nor branches could be seen. Above the hazel rose two straight, joyous maple-trees with gayly indented leaves, red stems and long dangling clusters of green fruit. Behind the maples came the forest—a green evenly rounded slope, where birds went out and in as elves in a grasshill.

All this you could see if you came wandering along the path through the fields beyond the fence. If, however, you were lying in the shadow of the oak with your back against the trunk and looking the other way—and there was a some one, who did that—then you would see first your own legs, then a little spot of short, vigorous grass, next a large cluster of dark nettles, then the hedge of thorn with the big, white convolvulus, the stile, a little of the ryefield outside, finally the councilor's flagpole on the hill, and then the sky.

It was stifling hot, the air was quivering with heat, and then it was very quiet; the leaves were hanging from the trees as if asleep. Nothing moved except the lady-birds and the nettles and a few withered leaves that lay on the grass and rolled themselves up with sudden little jerks as if they were shrinking from the sunbeams.

And then the man underneath the oak; he lay there gasping for air and with a melancholy look stared helplessly towards the sky. He tried to hum a tune, but gave it up; whistled, then gave that up too; turned round, turned round again and let his eyes rest upon an old mole-hill, that had become quite gray in the drought. Suddenly a small dark spot appeared upon the light-gray mold, another, three, four, many, still more, the entire mole-hill suddenly was quite dark-gray. The air was filled with nothing but long, dark streaks, the leaves nodded and swayed and there rose a murmur which turned into a hissing—rain was pouring down. Everything gleamed, sparkled, spluttered. Leaves, branches, trunks, everything shone with moisture; every little drop that fell on earth, on grass, on the fence, on whatever it was, broke and scattered in a thousand delicate pearls. Little drops hung for a while and became big drops, trickled down elsewhere, joined with other drops, formed small rivulets, disappeared into tiny furrows, ran into big holes and out of small ones, sailed away laden with dust, chips of wood and ragged bits of foliage, caused them to run aground, set them afloat, whirled them round and again caused them to ground. Leaves, which had been separated since they were in the bud, were reunited by the flood; moss, that had almost vanished in the dryness, expanded and became soft, crinkly, green and juicy; and gray lichens which nearly had turned to snuff, spread their delicate ends, puffed up like brocade and with a sheen like that of silk. The convolvuluses let their white crowns be filled to the brim, drank healths to each other, and emptied the water over the heads of the nettles. The fat black wood-snails crawled forward on their stomachs with a will, and looked approvingly towards the sky. And the man? The man was standing bareheaded in the midst of the downpour, letting the drops revel in his hair and brows, eyes, nose, mouth; he snapped his fingers at the rain, lifted a foot now and again as if he were about to dance, shook his head sometimes, when there was too much water in the hair, and sang at the top of his voice without knowing what he was singing, so pre-occupied was he with the rain:

Had I, oh had I a grandson, trala,
And a chest with heaps and heaps of gold,
Then very likely had I had a daughter, trala,
And house and home and meadows untold.

Had I, oh had I a daughter dear, trala,
And house and home and meadows untold,
Then very like had I had a sweetheart, trala.
And a chest with heaps and heaps of gold.

There he stood and sang in the rain, but yonder between the dark hazelbushes the head of a little girl was peeping out. A long end of her shawl of red silk had become entangled in a branch which projected a little beyond the others, and from time to time a small hand went forward and tugged at the end, but this had no other result, further than to produce a little shower of rain from the branch and its neighbors. The rest of the shawl lay close round the little girl's head and hid half of the brow; it shaded the eyes, then turned abruptly and became lost among the leaves, but reappeared in a big rosette of folds underneath the girl's chin. The face of the little girl looked very astonished, she was just about to laugh; the smile already hovered in the eyes. Suddenly he, who stood there singing in the midst of the downpour, took a few steps to the side, saw the red shawl, the face, the big brown eyes, the astonished little open mouth; instantly his position became awkward, in surprise he looked down himself; but in the same moment a small cry was heard, the projecting branch swayed violently, the red end of the shawl disappeared in a flash, the girl's face disappeared, and there was a rustling and rustling further and further away behind the hazelbushes. Then he ran. He did not know why, he did not think at all. The gay mood, which the rainstorm had called forth, welled up in him again, and he ran after the face of the little girl. It did not enter his head that it was a person he pursued. To him it was only the face of a little girl. He ran, it rustled to the right, it rustled to the left, it rustled in front, it rustled behind, he rustled, she rustled, and all these sounds and the running itself excited him, and he cried: "Where are you? Say cuckoo!" Nobody answered. When he heard his own voice, he felt just a little uneasy, but he continued running; then a thought came to him, only a single one, and he murmured as he kept on running: "What am I going to say to her? What am I going to say to her?" He was approaching a big bush, there she had hid herself, he could just see a corner of her skirt. "What am I going to say to her? What am I going to say to her?" he kept on murmuring while he ran. He was quite near the bush, then turned abruptly, ran on still murmuring the same, came out upon the open road, ran a distance, stopped abruptly and burst out laughing, walked smiling quietly a few paces, then burst out laughing loudly again, and did not cease

laughing all the way along the hedge.

It was on a beautiful autumn day; the fall of the foliage was going on apace and the path which led to the lake was quite covered with the citron-yellow leaves from the elms and maples; here and there were spots of a darker foliage. It was very pleasant, very clean to walk on this tigerskin-carpet, and to watch the leaves fall down like snow; the birch looked even lighter and more graceful with its branches almost bare and the roan-tree was wonderful with its heavy scarlet cluster of berries. And the sky was so blue, so blue, and the wood seemed so much bigger, one could look so far between the trunks. And then of course one could not help thinking that soon all this would be of the past. Wood, field, sky, open air, and everything soon would have to give way to the time of the lamps, the carpets, and the hyacinths. For this reason the councilor from Cape Trafalgar and his daughter were walking down to the lake, while their carriage stopped at the bailiff's.

The councilor was a friend of nature, nature was something quite special, nature was one of the finest ornaments of existence. The councilor patronized nature, he defended it against the artificial; gardens were nothing but nature spoiled; but gardens laid out in elaborate style were nature turned crazy. There was no style in nature, providence had wisely made nature natural, nothing but natural. Nature was that which was unrestrained, that which was unspoiled. But with the fall of man civilization had come upon mankind; now civilization had become a necessity; but it would have been better, if it had not been thus. The state of nature was something quite different, quite different. The councilor himself would have had no objection to maintaining himself by going about in a coat of lamb-skin and shooting hares and snipes and golden plovers and grouse and haunches of venison and wild boars. No, the state of nature really was like a gem, a perfect gem.

The councilor and his daughter walked down to the lake. For some time already it had glimmered between the trees, but now when they turned the corner where the big poplar stood, it lay quite open before them. There it lay with large spaces of water clear as a mirror, with jagged tongues of gray-blue rippled water, with streaks that were smooth and streaks that were rippled, and the sunlight rested on the smooth places and quivered in the ripples. It captured one's eye and drew it across its surface, carried it along the shores, past slowly rounded curves, past abruptly broken lines, and made it swing around the green tongues of land; then it let go of one's glance and disappeared in large bays, but it carried along the thought—Oh, to sail! Would it be possible to hire boats here?

No, there were none, said a little fellow, who lived in the white country-house near by, and stood at the shore skipping stones over the surface of the water. Were there really no boats at all?

Yes, of course, there were some; there was the miller's, but it could not be had; the miller would not permit it. Niels, the miller's son, had nearly gotten a spanking when he had let it out the other day. It was useless to think about it; but then there was the gentleman, who lived with Nicolai, the forest-warden. He had a fine boat, one which was black at the top and red at the bottom, and he lent it to each and every one.

The councilor and his daughter went up to Nicolai's, the forest-warden. At a short distance from the house they met a little girl. She was Nicolai's, and they told her to run in and ask if they might see the gentleman. She ran as if her life depended on it, ran with both arms and legs, until she reached the door; there she placed one leg on the high doorstep, fastened her garter, and then rushed into the house. She reappeared immediately afterwards with two doors ajar behind her and called long before she reached the threshold, that the gentleman would be there in a moment; then she sat down on the doorstep, leaned against the wall, and peered at the strangers from underneath one of her arms.

The gentleman came, and proved to be a tall strongly-built man of some twenty years. The councilor's daughter was a little startled, when she recognized in him the man, who had sung during the rainstorm. But he looked so strange and absentminded; quite obviously he had just been reading a book, one could tell that from the expression in his eyes, from his hair, from the abstracted way in which he managed his hands.

The councilor's daughter dropped him an exuberant courtesy and said "Cuckoo," and laughed.

"Cuckoo?" asked the councilor. Why, it was the little girl's face! The man went quite crimson, and tried to say something when the councilor came with a question about the boat. Yes, it was at his service. But who was going to do the rowing? Why, he of course, said the girl, and paid no attention to what her father said about it; it was immaterial whether it was a bother to the gentleman, for sometimes he himself did not mind at all troubling other people. Then they went down to the boat, and on the way explained things to the councilor. They stepped into the boat, and were already a good ways out, before the girl had settled herself comfortably and found time to talk.

"I suppose it was something very learned you were reading," she said, "when I came and called cuckoo and fetched you out sailing?"

"Rowing, you mean. Something learned! It was the 'History of Sir Peter with the Silver Key and the Beautiful Magelone.'"

"Who is that by?"

"By no one in particular. Books of that sort never are. 'Vigoleis with the Golden Wheel' isn't by anybody either, neither is 'Bryde, the Hunter.'"

"I have never heard of those titles before."

"Please move a little to the side, otherwise we will list.—Oh no, that is quite likely, they aren't fine books at all; they are the sort you buy from old women at fairs."

"That seems strange. Do you always read books of that kind?"

"Always? I don't read many books in the course of a year, and the kind I really like the best are those that have Indians in them."

"But poetry? Oehlenschlager, Schiller, and the others?"

"Oh, of course I know them; we had a whole bookcase full of them at home, and Miss Holm—my mother's companion—read them aloud after lunch and in the evenings; but I can't say that I cared for them; I don't like verse."

“Don’t like verse? You said had, isn’t your mother living any more?”

“No, neither is my father.”

He said this with a rather sullen, hostile tone, and the conversation halted for a time and made it possible to hear clearly the many little sounds created by the movement of the boat through the water. The girl broke the silence:

“Do you like paintings?”

“Altar-pieces? Oh, I don’t know.”

“Yes, or other pictures, landscapes for instance?”

“Do people paint those too? Of course they do, I know that very well.”

“You are laughing at me?”

“I? Oh yes, one of us is doing that”

“But aren’t you a student?”

“Student? Why should I be? No, I am nothing.”

“But you must be something. You must do something?”

“But why?”

“Why, because—everybody does something!”

“Are you doing something?”

“Oh well, but you are not a lady.”

“No, heaven be praised.”

“Thank you.”

He stopped rowing, drew the oars out of the water, looked her into the face and asked:

“What do you mean by that?—No, don’t be angry with me; I will tell you something, I am a queer sort of person. You cannot understand it. You think because I wear good clothes, I must be a fine man. My father was a fine man; I have been told that he knew no end of things, and I daresay he did, since he was a district-judge. I know nothing because mother and I were all to each other, and I did not care to learn the things they teach in the schools, and don’t care about them now either. Oh, you ought to have seen my mother; she was such a tiny wee lady. When I was no older than thirteen I could carry her down into the garden. She was so light; in recent years I would often carry her on my arm through the whole garden and park. I can still see her in her black gowns with the many wide laces....”

He seized the oars and rowed violently. The councilor became a little uneasy, when the water reached so high at the stern, and suggested, that they had better see about getting home again; so back they went.

“Tell me,” said the girl, when the violence of his rowing had decreased a little. “Do you often go to town?”

“I have never been there.”

“Never been there? And you only live twelve miles away?”

“I don’t always live here, I live at all sorts of places since my mother’s death, but the coming winter I shall go to town to study arithmetic.”

“Mathematics?”

“No, timber,” he said laughingly, “but that is something you don’t understand. I’ll tell you, when I am of age I shall buy a sloop and sail to Norway, and then I shall have to know how to figure on account of the customs and clearance.”

“Would you really like that?”

“Oh, it, is magnificent on the sea, there is such a feeling of being alive in sailing—here we are at the landing-stage!”

He came alongside; the councilor and his daughter stepped ashore after having made him promise to come and see them at Cape Trafalgar. Then they returned to the bailiff’s, while he again rowed out on the lake. At the poplar they could still hear the sounds of the oars.

“Listen, Camilla,” said the councilor, who had been out to lock the outer door, “tell me,” he said, extinguishing his hand-lamp with the bit of his key, “was the rose they had at the Carlsens a Pompadour or Maintenon?”

“Cendrillon,” the daughter answered.

“That’s right, so it was,—well, I suppose we had better see that we get to bed now; good night, little girl, good night, and sleep well.”

When Camilla had entered her room, she pulled up the blind, leaned her brow against the cool pane, and hummed Elizabeth’s song from “The Fairy-hill.” At sunset a light breeze had begun to blow and a few tiny, white clouds, illumined by the moon, were driven towards Camilla. For a long while she stood regarding them; her eye followed them from a far distance, and she sang louder and louder as they drew nearer, kept silent a few seconds while they disappeared above her, then sought others, and followed them too. With a little sigh she pulled down the blind. She went to the dressing table, rested her elbows against her clasped hands and regarded her own picture in the mirror without really seeing it.

She was thinking of a tall young man, who carried a very delicate, tiny, blackdressed lady in his arms; she was thinking of a tall man, who steered his small ship in between cliffs and rocks in a devastating gale. She heard a whole conversation over again. She blushed: Eugene Carlson might have thought that you were paying court to him! With a little jealous association of ideas she continued: No one would ever run after Clara in a wood in the rainstorm, she would never have invited a stranger—literally asked him—to sail with her. “Lady to her fingertips,” Carlson had said of Clara; that really was a reprimand for you, you peasant-girl Camilla! Then she undressed with affected slowness, went to bed, took a small elegantly bound book from the bookshelf near by and opened the first page. She read through a short hand-written poem with a tired, bitter

expression on her face, then let the book drop to the floor and burst into tears; afterwards she tenderly picked it up again, put it back in its place and blew out the candle; lay there for a little while gazing disconsolately at the moonlit blind, and finally went to sleep.

A few days later the “rainman” started on his way to Cape Trafalgar. He met a peasant driving a load of rye straw, and received permission to ride with him. Then he lay down on his back in the straw and gazed at the cloudless sky. The first couple of miles he let his thoughts come and go as they listed, besides there wasn’t much variety in them. Most of them would come and ask him how a human being possibly could be so wonderfully beautiful, and they marveled that it really could be an entertaining occupation for several days to recall the features of a face, its changes of expression and coloring, the small movements of a head and a pair of hands, and the varying inflections in a voice. But then the peasant pointed with his whip towards the slate-roof about a mile away and said that the councilor lived over there, and the good Mogens rose from the straw and stared anxiously towards the roof. He had a strange feeling of oppression and tried to make himself believe that nobody was at home, but tenaciously came back to the conception that there was a large party, and he could not free himself from that idea, even though he counted how many cows “Country-joy” had on the meadow and how many heaps of gravel he could see along the road. At last the peasant stopped near a small path leading down to the country-house, and Mogens slid down from the cart and began to brush away the bits of straw while the cart slowly creaked away over the gravel on the road.

He approached the garden-gate step by step, saw a red shawl disappear behind the balcony windows, a small deserted white sewing-basket on the edge of the balcony, and the back of a still moving empty rocking-chair. He entered the garden, with his eyes fixed intently on the balcony, heard the councilor say good-day, turned his head toward the sound, and saw him standing there nodding, his arms full of empty flowerpots. They spoke of this and that, and the councilor began to explain, as one might put it, that the old specific distinction between the various kinds of trees had been abolished by grafting, and that for his part he did not like this at all. Then Camilla slowly approached wearing a brilliant glaring blue shawl. Her arms were entirely wrapped up in the shawl, and she greeted him with a slight inclination of the head and a faint welcome. The councilor left with his flower-pots, Camilla stood looking over her shoulders towards the balcony; Mogens looked at her. How had he been since the other day? Thank you, nothing especial had been the matter with him. Done much rowing? Why, yes, as usual, perhaps not quite as much. She turned her head towards him, looked coldly at him, inclined her head to one side and asked with half-closed eyes and a faint smile whether it was the beautiful Magelone who had engrossed his time. He did not know what she meant, but he imagined it was. Then they stood for a while and said nothing. Camilla took a few steps towards a corner, where a bench and a garden-chair stood. She sat down on the bench and asked him, after she was seated, looking at the chair, to be seated; he must be very tired after his long walk. He sat down in the chair.

Did he believe anything would come of the projected royal alliance? Perhaps, he was completely indifferent? Of course, he had no interest in the royal house. Naturally he hated aristocracy? There were very few young men who did not believe that democracy was, heaven only knew what. Probably he was one of those who attributed not the slightest political importance to the family alliances of the royal house? Perhaps he was mistaken. It had been seen.... She stopped suddenly, surprised that Mogens who had at first been somewhat taken aback at all this information, now looked quite pleased. He wasn’t to sit there, and laugh at her! She turned quite red.

“Are you very much interested in politics?” she asked timidly.

“Not in the least.”

“But why do you let me sit here talking politics eternally?”

“Oh, you say everything so charmingly, that it does not matter what you are talking about.”

“That really is no compliment.”

“It certainly is,” he assured her eagerly, for it seemed to him she looked quite hurt.

Camilla burst out laughing, jumped up, and ran to meet her father, took his arm, and walked back with him to the puzzled Mogens.

When dinner was through and they had drunk their coffee up on the balcony, the councilor suggested a walk. So the three of them went along the small way across the main road, and along a narrow path with stubble of rye on both sides, across the stile, and into the woods. There was the oak and everything else; there even were still convolvuluses on the hedge. Camilla asked Mogens to fetch some for her. He tore them all off, and came back with both hands full.

“Thank you, I don’t want so many,” she said, selected a few and let the rest fall to the ground. “Then I wish I had let them be,” Mogens said earnestly.

Camilla bent down and began to gather them up. She had expected him to help her and looked up at him in surprise, but he stood there quite calm and looked down at her. Now as she had begun, she had to go on, and gathered up they were; but she certainly did not talk to Mogens for a long while. She did not even look to the side where he was. But somehow or other they must have become reconciled, for when on their way back they reached the oak again, Camilla went underneath it and looked up into its crown. She tripped from one side to the other, gesticulated with her hands and sang, and Mogens had to stand near the hazelbushes to see what sort of a figure he had cut. Suddenly Camilla ran towards him, but Mogens lost his cue, and forgot both to shriek and to run away, and then Camilla laughingly declared that she was very dissatisfied with herself and that she would not have had the boldness to remain standing there, when such a horrible creature—and she pointed towards herself—came rushing towards her. But Mogens declared that he was very well satisfied with himself.

When towards sunset he was going home the councilor and Camilla accompanied him a little way. And as they were going home she said to her father that perhaps they ought to invite that lonesome young man rather frequently during the month, while it was still possible to stay in the country. He knew no one here about, and the councilor said “yes,” and smiled at being thought so guileless, but Camilla walked along and looked so gentle and serious, that one would not doubt but that she was the very personification of benevolence itself.

The autumn weather remained so mild that the councilor stayed on at Cape Trafalgar for another whole month, and the effect of the benevolence was that Mogens came twice the first week and about every day the third.

It was one of the last days of fair weather.

It had rained early in the morning and had remained overclouded far down into the forenoon; but now the sun had come forth. Its rays were so strong and warm, that the garden-paths, the lawns and the branches of the trees were enveloped in a fine filmy mist. The councilor walked about cutting asters. Mogens and Camilla were in a corner of the garden to take down some late winter apples. He stood on a table with a basket on his arm, she stood on a chair holding out a big white apron by the corners.

“Well, and what happened then?” she called impatiently to Mogens, who had interrupted the fairy-tale he was telling in order to reach an apple which hung high up.

“Then,” he continued, “the peasant began to run three times round himself and to sing: ‘To Babylon, to Babylon, with an iron ring through my head.’ Then he and his calf, his great-grandmother, and his black rooster flew away. They flew across oceans as broad as Arup Vejle, over mountains as high as the church at Jannerup, over Himmerland and through the Holstein lands even to the end of the world. There the kobold sat and ate breakfast; he had just finished when they came.

“‘You ought to be a little more god-fearing, little father,’ said the peasant, ‘otherwise it might happen that you might miss the kingdom of heaven.’”

“Well, he would gladly be god-fearing.”

“‘Then you must say grace after meals,’ said the peasant....”

“No, I won’t go on with the story,” said Mogens impatiently.

“Very well, then don’t,” said Camilla, and looked at him in surprise.

“I might as well say it at once,” continued Mogens, “I want to ask you something, but you mustn’t laugh at me.”

Camilla jumped down from the chair.

“Tell me—no, I want to tell you something myself—here is the table and there is the hedge, if you won’t be my bride, I’ll leap with the basket over the hedge and stay away. One!”

Camilla glanced furtively at him, and noticed that the smile had vanished from his face.

“Two!”

He was quite pale with emotion.

“Yes,” she whispered, and let go the ends of her apron so that the apples rolled toward all corners of the world and then she ran. But she did not run away from Mogens.

“Three,” said she, when he reached her, but he kissed her nevertheless.

The councilor was interrupted among his asters, but the district-judge’s son was too irreproachable a blending of nature and civilization for the councilor to raise objections.

It was late winter; the large heavy cover of snow, the result of a whole week’s uninterrupted blowing, was in the process of rapidly melting away. The air was full of sunlight and reflection from the white snow, which in large, shining drops dripped down past the windows. Within the room all forms and colors had awakened, all lines and contours had come to life. Whatever was flat extended, whatever was bent curved, whatever was inclined slid, and whatever was broken refracted the more. All kinds of green tones mingled on the flower-table, from the softest dark-green to the sharpest yellow-green. Reddish brown tones flooded in flames across the surface of the mahogany table, and gold gleamed and sparkled from the knick-knacks, from the frames and moldings, but on the carpet all the colors broke and mingled in a joyous, shimmering confusion.

Camilla sat at the window and sewed, and she and the Graces on the mantle were quite enveloped in a reddish light from the red curtains Mogens walked slowly up and down the room, and passed every moment in and out of slanting beams of light of pale rainbow-colored dust.

He was in talkative mood.

“Yes,” he said, “they are a curious kind of people, these with whom you associate. There isn’t a thing between heaven and earth which they cannot dispose of in the turn of a hand. This is common, and that is noble; this is the most stupid thing that has been done since the creation of the world, and that is the wisest; this is so ugly, so ugly, and that is so beautiful it cannot be described. They agree so absolutely about all this, that it seems as if they had some sort of a table or something like that by which they figured things out, for they always get the same result, no matter what it may be. How alike they are to each other, these people! Every one of them knows the same things and talks about the same things, and all of them have the same words and the same opinions.”

“You don’t mean to say,” Camilla protested, “that Carlsen and Ronholt have the same opinions.”

“Yes, they are the finest of all, they belong to different parties! Their fundamental principles are as different as night and day. No, they are not. They are in such agreement that it is a perfect joy. Perhaps there may be some little point about which they don’t agree; perhaps, it is merely a misunderstanding. But heaven help me, if it isn’t pure comedy to listen to them. It is as if they had prearranged to do everything possible not to agree. They begin by talking in a loud voice, and immediately talk themselves into a passion. Then one of them in his passion says something which he doesn’t mean, and then the other one says the direct opposite which he doesn’t mean either, and then the one attacks that which the other doesn’t mean, and the other that which the first one didn’t mean, and the game is on.”

“But what have they done to you?”

“They annoy me, these fellows. If you look into their faces it is just as if you had it under seal that nothing especial is ever going to happen in the world in the future.” Camilla laid down her sewing, went over and took hold of the corners of his coat collar and looked roguishly and questioningly at him.

“I cannot bear Carlsen,” he said angrily, and tossed his head.

“Well, and then.”

“And then you are very, very sweet,” he murmured with a comic tenderness.

“And then?”

“And then,” he burst out, “he looks at you and listens to you and talks to you in a way I don’t like. He is to quit that, for you are mine and not his. Aren’t you? You are not his, not his in any way. You are mine, you have bonded yourself to me as the doctor did to the devil; you are mine, body and soul, skin and bones, till all eternity.”

She nodded a little frightened, looked trustfully at him; her eyes filled with tears, then she pressed close to him and he put his arms around her, bent over her, and kissed her on the forehead.

The same evening Mogens went to the station with the councilor who had received a sudden order in reference to an official tour which he was to make. On this account Camilla was to go to her aunt’s the next morning and stay there until he returned.

When Mogens had seen his future father-in-law off, he went home, thinking of the fact that he now would not see Camilla for several days. He turned into the street where she lived. It was long and narrow and little frequented. A cart rumbled away at the furthest end; in this direction, too, there was the sound of footsteps, which grew fainter and fainter. At the moment he heard nothing but the barking of a dog within the building behind him. He looked up at the house in which Camilla lived; as usual the ground-floor was dark. The white-washed panes received only a little restless life from the flickering gleam of the lantern of the house next door. On the second story the windows were open and from one of them a whole heap of planks protruded beyond the window-frame. Camilla’s window was dark, dark also was everything above, except that in one of the attic windows there shimmered a white-golden gleam from the moon. Above the house the clouds were driving in a wild flight. In the houses on both sides the windows were lighted.

The dark house made Mogens sad. It stood there so forlorn and disconsolate; the open windows rattled on their hinges; water ran monotonously droning down the rainpipe; now and then a little water fell with a hollow dull thud at some spot which he could not see; the wind swept heavily through the street. The dark, dark house! Tears came into Mogen’s eyes, an oppressive weight lay on his chest, and he was seized by a strange dark sensation that he had to reproach himself for something concerning Camilla. Then he had to think of his mother, and he felt a great desire of laying his head on her lap and weeping his fill.

For a long while he stood thus with his hand pressed against his breast until a wagon went through the street at a sharp pace; he followed it and went home. He had to stand for a long time and rattle the front door before it would open, then he ran humming up the stairs, and when he had entered the room he threw himself down on the sofa with one of Smollett’s novels in his hand, and read and laughed till after midnight. At last it grew too cold in the room, he leaped up and went stamping up and down to drive away the chill. He stopped at the window. The sky in one corner was so bright, that the snow-covered roofs faded into it. In another corner several long-drawn clouds drifted by, and the atmosphere beneath them had a curious reddish tinge, a sheen that wavered unsteadily, a red smoking fog. He tore open the window, fire had broken out in the direction of the councilor’s. Down the stairs, down the street as fast as he could; down a cross-street, through a side-street, and then straight ahead. As yet he could not see anything, but as he turned round the corner he saw the red glow of fire. About a score of people clattered singly down the street. As they ran past each other, they asked where the fire was. The answer was “The sugar-refinery.” Mogens kept on running as quickly as before, but much easier at heart. Still a few streets, there were more and more people, and they were talking now of the soap-factory. It lay directly opposite the councilor’s. Mogens ran on as if possessed. There was only a single slanting cross-street left. It was quite filled with people: well-dressed men, ragged old women who stood talking in a slow, whining tone, yelling apprentices, over-dressed girls who whispered to each other, corner-loafers who stood as if rooted to the spot and cracked jokes, surprised drunkards and drunkards who quarreled, helpless policemen, and carriages that would go neither forwards nor backwards. Mogens forced his way through the multitude. Now he was at the corner; the sparks were slowly falling down upon him. Up the street; there were showers of sparks, the window-panes on both sides were aglow, the factory was burning, the councilor’s house was burning and the house next door also. There was nothing but smoke, fire and confusion, cries, curses, tiles that rattled down, blows of axes, wood that splintered, window-panes that jingled, jets of water that hissed, spluttered, and splashed, and amid all this the regular dull sob-like throb of the engines. Furniture, bedding, black helmets, ladders, shining buttons, illuminated faces, wheels, ropes, tarpaulin, strange instruments; Mogens rushed into their midst, over, under it all, forward to the house.

The facade was brightly illuminated by the flames from the burning factory, smoke issued from between the tiles of the roof and rolled out of the open windows of the first story. Within the fire rumbled and crackled. There was a slow groaning sound, that turned into a rolling and crashing, and ended in a dull boom. Smoke, sparks, and flames issued in torment out of all the openings of the house. And then the flames began to play and crackle with redoubled strength and redoubled clearness. It was the middle part of the ceiling of the first floor that fell. Mogens with both hands seized a large scaling-ladder which leaned against the part of the factory which was not yet in flames. For a moment he held it vertically, but then it slipped away from him and fell over toward the councilor’s house where it broke in a window-frame on the second story. Mogens ran up the ladder, and in through the opening. At first he had to close his eyes on account of the pungent wood-smoke, and the heavy suffocating fumes which rose from the charred wood that the water had reached took his breath away. He was in the dining-room. The living-room was a huge glowing abyss; the flames from the lower part of the house, now and then, almost reached up to the ceiling; the few boards that had remained hanging when the floor fell burned in brilliant yellowish-white flames; shadows and the gleam of flames flooded over the walls; the wall-paper here and there curled up, caught fire, and flew in flaming tatters down into the abyss; eager yellow flames licked their way up on the loosened moldings and picture-frames. Mogens crept over the ruins and fragments of the fallen wall towards the edge of the abyss, from which cold and hot blasts of air alternately struck his face; on the other side so much of the wall had fallen, that he could look

into Camilla's room, while the part that hid the councilor's office still stood. It grew hotter and hotter; the skin of his face became taut, and he noticed, that his hair was crinkling. Something heavy glided past his shoulder and remained lying on his back and pressed him down to the floor; it was the girder which slowly had slipped out of place. He could not move, breathing became more and more difficult, his temples throbbed violently; to his left a jet of water splashed against the wall of the dining-room, and the wish rose in him, that the cold, cold drops, which scattered in all directions might fall on him. Then he heard a moan on the other side of the abyss, and he saw something white stir on the floor in Camilla's room. It was she. She lay on her knees, and while her hips were swaying, held her hands pressed against each side of her head. She rose slowly, and came towards the edge of the abyss. She stood straight upright, her arms hung limply down, and the head went to and fro limply on the neck. Very, very slowly the upper part of her body fell forward, her long, beautiful hair swept the floor; a short violent flash of flame, and it was gone, the next moment she plunged down into the flames.

Mogens uttered a moaning sound, short, deep and powerful, like the roar of a wild beast, and at the same time made a violent movement, as if to get away from the abyss. It was impossible on account of the girder. His hands groped over the fragments of wall, then they stiffened as it were in a mighty clasp over the debris, and he began to strike his forehead against the wreckage with a regular beat, and moaned: "Lord God, Lord God, Lord God."

Thus he lay. In the course of a little while, he noticed that there was something standing beside him and touching him. It was a fireman who had thrown the girder aside, and was about to carry him out of the house. With a strong feeling of annoyance, Mogens noticed that he was lifted up and led away. The man carried him to the opening, and then Mogens had a clear perception that a wrong was being committed against him, and that the man who was carrying him had designs on his life. He tore himself out of his arms, seized a lathe that lay on the floor, struck the man over the head with it so that he staggered backward; he himself issued from the opening and ran erect down the ladder, holding the lathe above his head. Through the tumult, the smoke, the crowd of people, through empty streets, across desolate squares, out into the fields. Deep snow everywhere, at a little distance a black spot, it was a gravel-heap, that jutted out above the snow. He struck at it with the lathe, struck again and again, continued to strike at it; he wished to strike it dead, so that it might disappear; he wanted to run far away, and ran round about the heap and struck at it as if possessed. It would not, would not disappear; he hurled the lathe far away and flung himself upon the black heap to give it the finishing stroke. He got his hands full of small stones, it was gravel, it was a black heap of gravel. Why was he out here in the field burrowing in a black gravel-heap?—He smelled the smoke, the flames flashed round him, he saw Camilla sink down into them, he cried out aloud and rushed wildly across the field. He could not rid himself of the sight of the flames, he held his eyes shut: Flames, flames! He threw himself on the ground and pressed his face down into the snow: Flames! He leaped up, ran backward, ran forward, turned aside: Flames everywhere! He rushed further across the snow, past houses, past trees, past a terror-struck face, that stared out through a window-pane, round stacks of grain and through farm-yards, where dogs howled and tore at their chains. He ran round the front wing of a building and stood suddenly before a brightly, restlessly lighted window. The light did him good, the flames yielded to it; he went to the window and looked in. It was a brew-room, a girl stood at the hearth and stirred the kettle. The light which she held in her hand had a slightly reddish sheen on account of the dense fumes. Another girl was sitting down, plucking poultry, and a third was singeing it over a blazing straw-fire. When the flames grew weaker, new straw was put on, and they flared up again; then they again became weaker and still weaker; they went out. Mogens angrily broke a pane with his elbow, and slowly walked away. The girls inside screamed. Then he ran again for a long time with a low moaning. Scattered flashes of memory of happy days came to him, and when they had passed the darkness was twice as black. He could not bear to think of what had happened. It was impossible for it to have happened. He threw himself down on his knees and raised his hands toward heaven, the while he pleaded that that which had happened might be as though it had not occurred. For a long time he dragged himself along on his knees with his eyes steadfastly fixed on the sky, as if afraid it might slip away from him to escape his pleas, provided he did not keep it incessantly in his eye. Then pictures of his happy time came floating toward him, more and more in mist-like ranks. There were also pictures that rose in a sudden glamor round about him, and others flitted by so indefinite, so distant, that they were gone before he really knew what they were. He sat silently in the snow, overcome by light and color, by light and happiness, and the dark fear which he had had at first that something would come and extinguish all this had gone. It was very still round about him, a great peace was within him, the pictures had disappeared, but happiness was here. A deep silence! There was not a sound, but sounds were in the air. And there came laughter and song and low words came and light and footsteps and dull sobbing of the beats of the pumps. Moaning he ran away, ran long and far, came to the lake, followed the shore, until he stumbled over the root of a tree, and then he was so tired that he remained lying.

With a soft clucking sound the water ran over the small stones; spasmodically there was a soft soughing among the barren limbs; now and then a crow cawed above the lake; and morning threw its sharp bluish gleam over forest and sea, over the snow, and over the pallid face.

At sunrise he was found by the ranger from the neighboring forest, and carried up to the forester Nicolai; there he lay for weeks and days between life and death.

About the time when Mogens was being carried up to Nicolai's, a crowd collected around a carriage at the end of the street where the councilor lived. The driver could not understand why the policeman wanted to prevent him from carrying out his legitimate order, and on that account they had an argument. It was the carriage which was to take Camilla to her aunt's.

"No, since poor Camilla lost her life in that dreadful manner, we have not seen anything of him!"

"Yes, it is curious, how much may lie hidden in a person. No one would have suspected anything, so quiet and shy, almost awkward. Isn't it so? You did not suspect anything?"

"About the sickness! How can you ask such a question! Oh, you mean—I did not quite understand you—you

mean it was in the blood, something hereditary?—Oh, yes, I remember there was something like that, they took his father to Aarhus. Wasn't it so, Mr. Carlsen?"

"No! Yes, but it was to bury him, his first wife is buried there. No, what I was thinking of was the dreadful—yes, the dreadful life he has been leading the last two or two and a half years."

"Why no, really! I know nothing about that."

"Well, you see, of course, it is of the things one doesn't like to talk about.... You understand, of course, consideration for those nearest. The councilor's family...."

"Yes, there is a certain amount of justice in what you say—but on the other hand—tell me quite frankly, isn't there at present a false, a sanctimonious striving to veil, to cover up the weaknesses of our fellow-men? As for myself I don't understand much about that sort of thing, but don't you think that truth or public morals, I don't mean this morality, but—morals, conditions, whatever you will, suffer under it?"

"Of course, and I am very glad to be able to agree so with you, and in this case... the fact simply is, that he has given himself to all sorts of excesses. He has lived in the most disreputable manner with the lowest dregs, people without honor, without conscience, without position, religion, or anything else, with loafers, mountebanks, drunkards, and—and to tell the truth with women of easy virtue."

"And this after having been engaged to Camilla, good heavens, and after having been down with brain-fever for three months!"

"Yes—and what tendencies doesn't this let us suspect, and who knows what his past may have been, what do you think?"

"Yes, and heaven knows how things really were with him during the time of their engagement? There always was something suspicious about him. That is my opinion.

"Pardon me, and you, too, Mr. Carlsen, pardon me, but you look at the whole affair in rather an abstract way, very abstractedly. By chance I have in my possession a very concrete report from a friend in Jutland, and can present the whole affair in all its details."

"Mr. Ronholt, you don't mean to...?"

"To give details? Yes, that is what I intend. Mr. Carlsen, with the lady's permission. Thank you! He certainly did not live as one should live after a brain-fever. He knocked about from fair to fair with a couple of boon-companions, and, it is said, was somewhat mixed up with troupes of mountebanks, and especially with the women of the company. Perhaps it would be wisest if I ran upstairs, and got my friend's letter. Permit me. I'll be back in a moment."

"Don't you think, Mr. Carlsen, that Ronholt is in a particularly good humor to-day?"

"Yes, but you must not forget that he exhausted all his spleen on an article in the morning paper. Imagine, to dare to maintain—why, that is pure rebellion, contempt of law, for him...."

"You found the letter?"

"Yes, I did. May I begin? Let me see, oh yes: 'Our mutual friend whom we met last year at Monsted, and whom, as you say, you knew in Copenhagen, has during the last months haunted the region hereabouts. He looks just as he used to, he is the same pale knight of the melancholy mien. He is the most ridiculous mixture of forced gayety and silent hopelessness, he is affected—ruthless and brutal toward himself and others. He is taciturn and a man of few words, and doesn't seem to be enjoying himself at all, though he does nothing but drink and lead a riotous life. It is as I have already said, as if he had a fixed idea that he received a personal insult from destiny. His associates here were especially a horse-dealer, called "Mug-sexton," because he does nothing but sing and drink all the time, and a disreputable, lanky, over-grown cross between a sailor and peddler, known and feared under the name of Peter "Rudderless," to say nothing of the fair Abelone. She, however, recently has had to give way to a brunette, belonging to a troupe of mountebanks, which for some time has favored us with performances of feats of strength and rope-dancing. You have seen this kind of women with sharp, yellow, prematurely-aged faces, creatures that are shattered by brutality, poverty, and miserable vices, and who always over-dress in shabby velvet and dirty red. There you have his crew. I don't understand our friend's passion. It is true that his fiancee met with a horrible death, but that does not explain the matter. I must still tell you how he left us. We had a fair a few miles from here. He, "Rudderless," the horse-dealer, and the woman sat in a drinking-tent, dissipating until far into the night. At three o'clock or thereabouts they were at last ready to leave. They got on the wagon, and so far everything went all right; but then our mutual friend turns off from the main road and drives with them over fields and heath, as fast as the horses can go. The wagon is flung from one side to the other. Finally things get too wild for the horse-dealer and he yells that he wants to get down. After he has gotten off our mutual friend whips up the horses again, and drives straight at a large heather-covered hill. The woman becomes frightened and jumps off, and now up the hill they go and down on the other side at such a terrific pace that it is a miracle the wagon did not arrive at the bottom ahead of the horses. On the way up Peter had slipped from the wagon, and as thanks for the ride he threw his big clasp-knife at the head of the driver.'"

"The poor fellow, but this business of the woman is nasty."

"Disgusting, madam, decidedly disgusting. Do you really think, Mr. Ronholt, that this description puts the man in a better light?"

"No, but in a surer one; you know in the darkness things often seem larger than they are."

"Can you think of anything worse?"

"If not, then this is the worst, but you know one should never think the worst of people."

"Then you really mean, that the whole affair is not so bad, that there is something bold in it, something in a sense eminently plebeian, which pleases your liking for democracy."

"Don't you see, that in respect to his environment his conduct is quite aristocratic?"

"Aristocratic? No, that is lather paradoxical. If he is not a democrat, then I really don't know what he is."

"Well, there are still other designations."

White alders, bluish lilac, red hawthorn, and radiant laburnum were in flower and gave forth their fragrance in front of the house. The windows were open and the blinds were drawn. Mogens leaned in over the sill and the blinds lay on his back. It was grateful to the eye after all the summer-sun on forest and water and in the air to look into the subdued, soft, quiet light of a room. A tall woman of opulent figure stood within, the back toward the window, and was putting flowers in a large vase. The waist of her pink morning-gown was gathered high up below, the bosom by a shining black leather-belt; on the floor behind her lay a snow-white dressing-jacket; her abundant, very blond hair was hanging in a bright-red net.

“You look rather pale after the celebration last night,” was the first thing Mogens said.

“Good-morning,” she replied and held out without turning around her hand with the flowers in it towards him. Mogens took one of the flowers. Laura turned the head half towards him, opened her hand slightly and let the flowers fall to the floor in little lots. Then she again busied herself with the vase.

“Ill?” asked Mogens.

“Tired.”

“I won’t eat breakfast with you to-day.”

“No?”

“We can’t have dinner together either.”

“You are going fishing?”

“No—Good-by!”

“When are you coming back?”

“I am not coming back.”

“What do you mean by that?” she asked arranging her gown; she went to the window, and there sat down on the chair.

“I am tired of you. That’s all.”

“Now you are spiteful, what’s the matter with you? What have I done to you?”

“Nothing, but since we are neither married nor madly in love with each other, I don’t see anything very strange in the fact, that I am going my own way.”

“Are you jealous?” she asked very softly.

“Of one like you! I haven’t lost my senses!”

“But what is the meaning of all this?”

“It means that I am tired of your beauty, that I know your voice and your gestures by heart, and that neither your whims nor your stupidity nor your craftiness can any longer entertain me. Can you tell me then why I should stay?”

Laura wept. “Mogens, Mogens, how can you have the heart to do this? Oh, what shall I, shall I, shall I, shall I do! Stay only today, only to-day, Mogens. You dare not go away from me!”

“Those are lies, Laura, you don’t even believe it yourself. It is not because you think such a terrible lot of me, that you are distressed now. You are only a little bit alarmed because of the change, you are frightened because of the slight disarrangement of your daily habits. I am thoroughly familiar with that, you are not the first one I have gotten tired of.”

“Oh, stay with me only to-day, I won’t torment you to stay a single hour longer.

“You really are dogs, you women! You haven’t a trace of fine feelings in your body. If one gives you a kick, you come crawling back again.”

“Yes, yes, that’s what we do, but stay only for to-day—won’t you—stay!”

“Stay, stay! No!”

“You have never loved me, Mogens!”

“No!”

“Yes, you did; you loved me the day when there was such a violent wind, oh, that beautiful day down at the sea-shore, when we sat in the shelter of the boat.”

“Stupid girl!”

“If I only were a respectable girl with fine parents, and not such a one as I am, then you would stay with me; then you would not have the heart to be so hard—and I, who love you so!”

“Oh, don’t bother about that.”

“No, I am like the dust beneath your feet, you care no more for me. Not one kind word, only hard words; contempt, that is good enough for me.”

“The others are neither better nor worse than you. Good-by, Laura!”

He held out his hand to her, but she kept hers on her back and wailed: “No, no, not good-by! not good-by!”

Mogens raised the blind, stepped back a couple of paces and let it fall down in front of the window. Laura quickly leaned down over the window-sill beneath it and begged: “Come to me! come and give me your hand.”

“No.”

When he had gone a short distance she cried plaintively:

“Good-by, Mogens!”

He turned towards the house with a slight greeting. Then he walked on: “And a girl like that still believes in love!—no, she does not!”

The evening wind blew from the ocean over the land, the strand-grass swung its pale spikes to and fro and raised its pointed leaves a little, the rushes bowed down, the water of the lake was darkened by thousands of

tiny furrows, and the leaves of the water-lilies tugged restlessly at their stalks. Then the dark tops of the heather began to nod, and on the fields of sand the sorrel swayed unsteadily to and fro. Towards the land! The stalks of oats bowed downward, and the young clover trembled on the stubble-fields, and the wheat rose and fell in heavy billows; the roofs groaned, the mill creaked, its wings swung about, the smoke was driven back into the chimneys, and the window-panes became covered with moisture.

There was a swishing of wind in the gable-windows, in the poplars of the manor-house; the wind whistled through tattered bushes on the green hill of Bredbjerg. Mogens lay up there, and gazed out over the dark earth. The moon was beginning to acquire radiance, and mists were drifting down on the meadow. Everything was very sad, all of life, all of life, empty behind him, dark before him. But such was life. Those who were happy were also blind. Through misfortune he had learned to see; everything was full of injustice and lies, the entire earth was a huge, rotting lie; faith, friendship, mercy, a lie it was, a lie was each and everything; but that which was called love, it was the hollowest of all hollow things, it was lust, flaming lust, glimmering lust, smoldering lust, but lust and nothing else. Why had he to know this? Why had he not been permitted to hold fast to his faith in all these gilded lies? Why was he compelled to see while the others remained blind? He had a right to blindness, he had believed in everything in which it was possible to believe.

Down in the village the lights were being lit.

Down there home stood beside home. My home! my home! And my childhood's belief in everything beautiful in the world.—And what if they were right, the others! If the world were full of beating hearts and the heavens full of a loving God! But why do I not know that, why do I know something different? And I do know something different, cutting, bitter, true...

He rose; fields and meadows lay before him bathed in moonlight. He went down into the village, along the way past the garden of the manor-house; he went and looked over the stone-wall. Within on a grass-plot in the garden stood a silver poplar, the moonlight fell sharply on the quivering leaves; sometimes they showed their dark side, sometimes their white. He placed his elbows on the wall and stared at the tree; it looked as if the leaves were running in a fine rain down the limbs. He believed, that he was hearing the sound which the foliage produced. Suddenly the lovely voice of a woman became audible quite near by:

"Flower in dew! Flower in dew!
Whisper to me thy dreams, thine own.
Does in them lie the same strange air
The same wonderful elfin air,
As in mine own?
Are they filled with whispers and sobbing and sighing
Amid radiance slumbering and fragrances dying,
Amid trembling ringing, amid rising singing:
In longing,
In longing,
I live."

Then silence fell again. Mogens drew a long breath and listened intently: no more singing; up in the house a door was heard. Now he clearly heard the sound from the leaves of the silver poplar. He bowed his head in his arms and wept.

The next day was one of those in which late summer is rich. A day with a brisk, cool wind, with many large swiftly flying clouds, with everlasting alternations of darkness and light, according as the clouds drift past the sun. Mogens had gone up to the cemetery, the garden of the manor abutted on it. Up there it looked rather barren, the grass had recently been cut; behind an old quadrangular iron-fence stood a wide-spreading, low elder with waving foliage. Some of the graves had wooden frames around them, most were only low, quadrangular hills; a few of them had metal-pieces with inscriptions on them, others wooden crosses from which the colors had peeled, others had wax wreaths, the greater number had nothing at all. Mogens wandered about hunting for a sheltered place, but the wind seemed to blow on all sides of the church. He threw himself down near the embankment, drew a book out of his pocket; but he did not get on with his reading; every time when a cloud went past the sun, it seemed to him as though it were growing chilly, and he thought of getting up, but then the light came again and he remained lying. A young girl came slowly along the way, a greyhound and a pointer ran playfully ahead of her. She stopped and it seemed as if she wanted to sit down, but when she saw Mogens she continued her walk diagonally across the cemetery out through the gate. Mogens rose and looked after her; she walked down on the main road, the dogs still played. Then he began reading the inscription on one of the graves; it quickly made him smile. Suddenly a shadow fell across the grave and remained lying there, Mogens looked sideways. A tanned, young man stood there, one hand in his game-bag, in the other he held his gun.

"It isn't really half bad," he said, indicating the inscription.

"No," said Mogens and straightened up from his bent position.

"Tell me," continued the hunter, and looked to the side, as if seeking something, "you have been here for a couple of days, and I have been going about wondering about you, but up to the present didn't come near you. You go and drift about so alone, why haven't you looked in on us? And what in the world do you do to kill the time? For you haven't any business in the neighborhood, have you?"

"No, I am staying here for pleasure."

"There isn't much of that here," the stranger exclaimed and laughed, "don't you shoot? Wouldn't you like to come with me? Meanwhile I have to go down to the inn and get some small shot, and while you are getting ready, I can go over, and call down the blacksmith. Well! Will you join?"

"Yes, with pleasure."

"Oh, by the way,—Thora! haven't you seen a girl?" he jumped up on the embankment.

"Yes, there she is, she is my cousin, I can't introduce you to her, but come along, let us follow her; we made a wager, now you can he the judge. She was to be in the cemetery with the dogs and I was to pass with gun and game-bag, but was not to call or to whistle, and if the dogs nevertheless went with me she would lose;

now we will see.”

After a little while they overtook the lady; the hunter looked straight ahead, but could not help smiling; Mogens bowed when they passed. The dogs looked in surprise after the hunter and growled a bit; then they looked up at the lady and barked, she wanted to pat them, but indifferently they walked away from her and barked after the hunter. Step by step they drew further and further away from her, squinted at her, and then suddenly darted off after the hunter. And when they reached him, they were quite out of control; they jumped up on him and rushed off in every direction and back again.

“You lose,” he called out to her; she nodded smilingly, turned round and went on.

They hunted till late in the afternoon. Mogens and William got along famously and Mogens had to promise that he would come to the manor-house in the evening. This he did, and later he came almost every day, but in spite of all the cordial invitations he continued living at the inn.

Now came a restless period for Mogens. At first Thora’s proximity brought back to life all his sad and gloomy memories. Often he had suddenly to begin a conversation with one of the others or leave, so that his emotion might not completely master him. She was not at all like Camilla, and yet he heard and saw only Camilla. Thora was small, delicate, and slender, roused easily to laughter, easily to tears, and easily to enthusiasm. If for a longer time she spoke seriously with some one, it was not like a drawing near, but rather as if she disappeared within her own self. If some one explained something to her or developed an idea, her face, her whole figure expressed the most intimate trust and now and again, perhaps, also expectancy. William and his little sister did not treat her quite like a comrade, but yet not like a stranger either. The uncle and the aunt, the farm-hands, the maid-servants, and the peasants of the neighborhood all paid court to her, but very carefully, and almost timidly. In respect to her they were almost like a wanderer in the forest, who sees close beside him one of those tiny, graceful song-birds with very clear eyes and light, captivating movements. He is enraptured by this tiny, living creature, he would so much like to have it come closer and closer, but he does not care to move, scarcely to take breath, lest it may be frightened and fly away.

As Mogens saw Thora more and more frequently, memories came more and more rarely, and he began to see her as she was. It was a time of peace and happiness when he was with her, full of silent longing and quiet sadness when he did not see her. Later he told her of Camilla and of his past life, and it was almost with surprise that he looked back upon himself. Sometimes it seemed inconceivable to him that it was he who had thought, felt, and done all the strange things of which he told.

On an evening he and Thora stood on a height in the garden, and watched the sunset. William and his little sister were playing hide-and-seek around the hill. There were thousands of light, delicate colors, hundreds of strong radiant ones. Mogens turned away from them and looked at the dark figure by his side. How insignificant it looked in comparison with all this glowing splendor; he sighed, and looked up again at the gorgeously colored clouds. It was not like a real thought, but it came vague and fleeting, existed for a second and disappeared; it was as if it had been the eye that thought it.

“The elves in the green hill are happy now that the sun has gone down,” said Thora.

“Oh—are they?”

“Don’t you know that elves love darkness?”

Mogens smiled.

“You don’t believe in elves, but you should. It is beautiful to believe in all that, in gnomes and elves. I believe in mermaids too, and elder-women, but goblins! What can one do with goblins and three-legged horses? Old Mary gets angry when I tell her this; for to believe what I believe, she says is not God-fearing. Such things have nothing to do with people, but warnings and spirits are in the gospel, too. What do you say?”

“I, oh, I don’t know—what do you really mean?”

“You surely don’t love nature?”

“But, quite the contrary.”

“I don’t mean nature, as you see it from benches placed where there is a fine view on hills up which they have built steps; where it is like a set scene, but nature every day, always.”

“Just so! I can take joy in every leaf, every twig, every beam of light, every shadow. There isn’t a hill so barren, nor a turf-pit so square, nor a road so monotonous, that I cannot for a moment fall in love with it.”

“But what joy can you take in a tree or a bush, if you don’t imagine that a living being dwells within it, that opens and closes the flowers and smooths the leaves? When you see a lake, a deep, clear lake, don’t you love it for this reason, that you imagine creatures living deep, deep down below, that have their own joys and sorrows, that have their own strange life with strange yearnings? And what, for instance, is there beautiful about the green hill of Berdbjerg, if you don’t imagine, that inside very tiny creatures swarm and buzz, and sigh when the sun rises, but begin to dance and play with their beautiful treasure-troves, as soon as evening comes.”

“How wonderfully beautiful that is! And you see that?”

“But you?”

“Yes, I can’t explain it, but there is something in the color, in the movements, and in the shapes, and then in the life which lives in them; in the sap which rises in trees and flowers, in the sun and rain that make them grow, in the sand which blows together in hills, and in the showers of rain that furrow and fissure the hillsides. Oh, I cannot understand this at all, when I am to explain it.”

“And that is enough for you?”

“Oh, more than enough sometimes—much too much! And when shape and color and movement are so lovely and so fleeting and a strange world lies behind all this and lives and rejoices and desires and can express all this in voice and song, then you feel so lonely, that you cannot come closer to this world, and life grows lusterless and burdensome.”

“No, no, you must not think of your fiancee in that way.”

“Oh, I am not thinking of her.”

William and his sister came up to them, and together they went into the house.

On a morning several days later Mogens and Thora were walking in the garden. He was to look at the grape-vine nursery, where he had not yet been. It was a rather long, but not very high hothouse. The sun sparkled and played over the glass-roof. They entered, the air was warm and moist, and had a peculiar heavy aromatic odor as of earth that has just been turned. The beautiful incised leaves and the heavy dewy grapes were resplendent and luminous under the sunlight. They spread out beneath the glass-cover in a great green field of blessedness. Thora stood there and happily looked upward; Mogens was restless and stared now and then unhappily at her, and then up into the foliage.

“Listen,” Thora said gayly, “I think, I am now beginning to understand what you said the other day on the hill about form and color.”

“And you understood nothing besides?” Mogens asked softly and seriously.

“No,” she whispered, looked quickly at him, dropped the glance, and grew red, “not then.”

“Not then,” Mogens repeated softly and kneeled down before her, “but now, Thora?” She bent down toward him, gave him one of her hands, and covered her eyes with the other and wept. Mogens pressed the hand against his breast, as he rose; she lifted her head, and he kissed her on the forehead. She looked up at him with radiant, moist eyes, smiled and whispered: “Heaven be praised!”

Mogens stayed another week. The arrangement was that the wedding was to take place in midsummer. Then he left, and winter came with dark days, long nights, and a snowstorm of letters.

All the windows of the manor-house were lighted, leaves and flowers were above every door, friends and acquaintances in a dense crowd stood on the large stone stairway, all looking out into the dusk.—Mogens had driven off with his bride.

The carriage rumbled and rumbled. The closed windows rattled. Thora sat and looked out of one of them, at the ditch of the highway, at the smith’s hill where primroses blossomed in spring, at Bertel Nielsen’s huge elderberry bushes, at the mill and the miller’s geese, and the hill of Dalum where not many years ago she and William slid down on sleighs, at the Dalum meadows, at the long, unnatural shadows of the horses that rushed over the gravel-heaps, over the turf-pits and rye-field. She sat there and wept very softly; from time to time when wiping the dew from the pane, she looked stealthily over towards Mogens. He sat bowed forward, his traveling-cloak was open, his hat lay and rocked on the front seat; his hands he held in front of his face. All the things he had to think of! It had almost robbed him of his courage. She had had to say good-by to all her relatives and friends and to an infinity of places, where memories lay ranged in strata, one above the other, right up to the sky, and all this so that she might go away with him. And was he the right sort of a man to place all one’s trust in, he with his past of brutalities and debaucheries! It was not even certain that all this was merely his past. He had changed, it is true, and he found it difficult to understand what he himself had been. But one never can wholly escape from one’s self, and what had been surely still was there. And now this innocent child had been given him to guard and protect. He had managed to get himself into the mire till over his head, and doubtless he would easily succeed in drawing her down into it too. No, no, it shall not be thus—no, she is to go on living her clear, bright girl’s life in spite of him. And the carriage rattled and rattled. Darkness had set in, and here and there he saw through the thickly covered panes, lights in the houses and yards past which they drove. Thora slumbered. Toward morning they came to their new home, an estate that Mogens had bought. The horses steamed in the chill morning air; the sparrows twittered on the huge linden in the court, and the smoke rose slowly from the chimneys. Thora looked smiling and contented at all this after Mogens had helped her out of the carriage; but there was no other way about, she was sleepy and too tired to conceal it. Mogens took her to her room and then went into the garden, sat down on a bench, and imagined that he was watching the sunrise, but he nodded too violently to keep up the deception. About noon he and Thora met again, happy and refreshed. They had to look at things and express their surprise; they consulted and made decisions; they made the absurdest suggestions; and how Thora struggled to look wise and interested when the cows were introduced to her; and how difficult it was not to be all too unpractically enthusiastic over a small shaggy young dog; and how Mogens talked of drainage and the price of grain, while he stood there and in his heart wondered how Thora would look with red poppies in her hair! And in the evening, when they sat in their conservatory and the moon so clearly drew the outline of the windows on the floor, what a comedy they played, he on his part seriously representing to her that she should go to sleep, really go to sleep, since she must be tired, the while he continued to hold her hand in his; and she on her part, when she declared he was disagreeable and wanted to be rid of her, that he regretted having taken a wife. Then a reconciliation, of course, followed, and they laughed, and the hour grew late. Finally Thora went to her room, but Mogens remained sitting in the conservatory, miserable that she had gone. He drew black imaginings for himself, that she was dead and gone, and that he was sitting here all alone in the world and weeping over her, and then he really wept. At length he became angry at himself and stalked up and down the floor, and wanted to be sensible. There was a love, pure and noble, without any coarse, earthly passion; yes, there was, and if there was not, there was going to be one. Passion spoiled everything, and it was very ugly and unhuman. How he hated everything in human nature that was not tender and pure, fine and gentle! He had been subjugated, weighed down, tormented, by this ugly and powerful force; it had lain in his eyes and ears, it had poisoned all his thoughts.

He went to his room. He intended to read and took a book; he read, but had not the slightest notion what—could anything have happened to her! No, how could it? But nevertheless he was afraid, possibly there might have—no, he could no longer stand it. He stole softly to her door; no, everything was still and peaceful. When he listened intently it seemed as if he could hear her breathing—how his heart throbbed, it seemed, he could hear it too. He went back to his room and his book. He closed his eyes; how vividly he saw her; he heard her voice, she bent down toward him and whispered—how he loved her, loved her, loved her! It was like a song within him; it seemed as if his thoughts took on rhythmic form, and how clearly he could see everything of which he thought! Still and silent she lay and slept, her arm beneath the neck, her hair loosened, her eyes

were closed, she breathed very softly—the air trembled within, it was red like the reflection of roses. Like a clumsy faun, imitating the dance of the nymphs, so the bed-cover with its awkward folds outlined her delicate form. No, no, he did not want to think of her, not in that way, for nothing in all the world, no; and now it all came back again, it could not be kept away, but he would keep it away, away! And it came and went, came and went, until sleep seized him, and the night passed.

When the sun had set on the evening of the next day, they walked about together in the garden. Arm in arm they walked very slowly and very silently up one path and down the other, out of the fragrance of mignonettes through that of roses into that of jasmine. A few moths fluttered past them; out in the grain-field a wild duck called, otherwise most of the sounds came from Thora's silk dress.

"How silent we can be," exclaimed Thora.

"And how we can walk!" Mogens continued, "we must have walked about four miles by now."

Then they walked again for a while and were silent.

"Of what are you thinking now?" she asked.

"I am thinking of myself."

"That's just what I am doing."

"Are you also thinking of yourself?"

"No, of yourself—of you, Mogens."

He drew her closer. They were going up to the conservatory. The door was open; it was very light in there, and the table with the snowy-white cloth, the silver dish with the dark red strawberries, the shining silver pot and the chandelier gave quite a festive impression.

"It is as in the fairy-tale, where Hansel and Gretel come to the cake-house out in the wood," Thora said.

"Do you want to go in?"

"Oh, you quite forget, that in there dwells a witch, who wants to put us unhappy little children into an oven and eat us. No, it is much better that we resist the sugar-panes and the pancake-roof, take each other by the hand, and go back into the dark, dark wood."

They walked away from the conservatory. She leaned closely toward Mogens and continued: "It may also be the palace of the Grand Turk and you are the Arab from the desert who wants to carry me off, and the guard is pursuing us; the curved sabers flash, and we run and run, but they have taken your horse, and then they take us along and put us into a big bag, and we are in it together and are drowned in the sea.—Let me see, or might it be…?"

"Why might it not be, what it is?"

"Well, it might be that, but it is not enough…. If you knew how I love you, but I am so unhappy—I don't know what it is—there is such a great distance between us—no—"

She flung her arms round his neck and kissed him passionately and pressed her burning cheek against his:

"I don't know how it is, but sometimes I almost wish that you beat me—I know it is childish, and that I am very happy, very happy, and yet I feel so unhappy!"

She laid her head on his breast and wept, and then she began while her tears were still streaming, to sing, at first very gently, but then louder and louder:

"In longing
In longing! live!"

"My own little wife!" and he lifted her up in his arms and carried her in.

In the morning he stood beside her bed. The light came faintly and subdued through the drawn blinds. It softened all the lines in the room and made all the colors seem sated and peaceful. It seemed to Mogens as if the air rose and fell with her bosom in gentle rarifications. Her head rested a little sidewise on the pillow, her hair fell over her white brow, one of her cheeks was a brighter red than the other, now and then there was a faint quivering in the calmly-arched eyelids, and the lines of her mouth undulated imperceptibly between unconscious seriousness and slumbering smiles. Mogens stood for a long time and looked at her, happy and quiet. The last shadow of his past had disappeared. Then he stole away softly and sat down in the living-room and waited for her in silence. He had sat there for a while, when he felt her head on his shoulder and her cheek against his.

They went out together into the freshness of the morning. The sunlight was jubilant above the earth, the dew sparkled, flowers that had awakened early gleamed, a lark sang high up beneath the sky, swallows flew swiftly through the air. He and she walked across the green field toward the hill with the ripening rye; they followed the footpath which led over there. She went ahead, very slowly and looked back over her shoulder toward him, and they talked and laughed. The further they descended the hill, the more the grain intervened, soon they could no longer be seen.

THE PLAGUE IN BERGAMO

Old Bergamo lay on the summit of a low mountain, hedged in by walls and gates, and New Bergamo lay at the foot of the mountain, exposed to all winds.

One day the plague broke out in the new town and spread at a terrific speed; a multitude of people died and the others fled across the plains to all four corners of the world. And the citizens in Old Bergamo set fire to

the deserted town in order to purify the air, but it did no good. People began dying up there too, at first one a day, then five, then ten, then twenty, and when the plague had reached its height, a great many more.

And they could not flee as those had done, who lived in the new town.

There were some, who tried it, but they led the life of a hunted animal, hid in ditches and sewers, under hedges, and in the green fields; for the peasants, into whose homes in many places the first fugitives had brought the plague, stoned every stranger they came across, drove him from their lands, or struck him down like a mad dog without mercy or pity, in justifiable self-defense, as they believed.

The people of Old Bergamo had to stay where they were, and day by day it grew hotter; and day by day the gruesome disease became more voracious and more grasping. Terror grew to madness. What there had been of order and good government was as if the earth had swallowed it, and what was worst in human nature came in its stead.

At the very beginning when the plague broke out people worked together in harmony and concord. They took care that the corpses were duly and properly buried, and every day saw to it that big bonfires were lighted in squares and open places so that the healthful smoke might drift through the streets. Juniper and vinegar were distributed among the poor, and above all else, the people sought the churches early and late, alone and in processions. Every day they went with their prayers before God and every day when the sun was setting behind the mountains, all the churchbells called wailingly towards heaven from hundreds of swinging throats. Fasts were ordered and every day holy relics were set out on the altars.

At last one day when they did not know what else to do, from the balcony of the town hall, amid the sound of trumpets and horns, they proclaimed the Holy Virgin, podesta or lordmayor of the town now and forever.

But all this did not help; there was nothing that helped.

And when the people felt this and the belief grew stronger that heaven either would not or could not help, they not only let their hands lie idly in the lap, saying, “Let there come what may.” Nay, it seemed, as if sin had grown from a secret, stealthy disease into a wicked, open, raging plague, which hand in hand with the physical contagion sought to slay the soul as the other strove to destroy the body, so incredible were their deeds, so enormous their depravity! The air was filled with blasphemy and impiety, with the groans of the gluttons and the howling of drunkards. The wildest night hid not greater debauchery than was here committed in broad daylight.

“To-day we shall eat, for to-morrow we die!”—It was as if they had set these words to music, and played on manifold instruments a never-ending hellish concert. Yea, if all sins had not already been invented, they would have been invented here, for there was no road they would not have followed in their wickedness. The most unnatural vices flourished among them, and even such rare sins as necromancy, magic, and exorcism were familiar to them, for there were many who hoped to obtain from the powers of evil the protection which heaven had not vouchsafed them.

Whatever had to do with mutual assistance or pity had vanished from their minds; each one had thoughts only for himself. He who was sick was looked upon as a common foe, and if it happened that any one was unfortunate enough to fall down on the street, exhausted by the first fever-paroxysm of the plague, there was no door that opened to him, but with lance-pricks and the casting of stones they forced him to drag himself out of the way of those who were still healthy.

And day by day the plague increased, the summer’s sun blazed down upon the town, not a drop of rain fell, not the faintest breeze stirred. From corpses that lay rotting in the houses and from corpses that were only half-buried in the earth, there was engendered a suffocating stench which mingled with the stagnant air of the streets and attracted swarms and clouds of ravens and crows until the walls and roofs were black with them. And round about the wall encircling the town sat strange, large, outlandish birds from far away with beaks eager for spoil and expectantly crooked claws; and they sat there and looked down with their tranquil greedy eyes as if only waiting for the unfortunate town to turn into one huge carrion-pit.

It was just eleven weeks since the plague had broken out, when the watchman in the tower and other people who were standing in high places saw a strange procession wind from the plain into the streets of the new town between the smoke-blackened stone walls and the black ash-heaps of the wooden houses. A multitude of people! At least, six hundred or more, men and women, old and young, and they carried big black crosses between them and above their heads floated wide banners, red as fire and blood. They sing as they are moving onward and heartrending notes of despair rise up into the silent sultry air.

Brown, gray, and black are their clothes, but all wear a red badge on their breast. A cross it proves to be, as they draw nearer. For all the time they are drawing nearer. They press upward along the steep road, flanked by walls, which leads up to the old town. It is a throng of white faces; they carry scourges in their hands. On their red banners a rain of fire is pictured. And the black crosses sway from one side to the other in the crowd.

From the dense mass there rises a smell of sweat, of ashes, of the dust of the roadway, and of stale incense.

They no longer sing, neither do they speak, nothing is audible but the tramping, herd-like sound of their naked feet.

Face after face plunges into the darkness of the tower-gate, and emerges into the light on the other side with a dazed, tired expression and half-closed lids.

Then the singing begins again: a miserere; they grasp their scourges more firmly and walk with a brisker step as if to a war-song.

They look as if they came from a famished city, their cheeks are hollow, their bones stand out, their lips are bloodless, and they have dark rings beneath their eyes.

The people of Bergamo have flocked together and watch them with amazement—and uneasiness. Red dissipated faces stand contrasted with these pale white ones; dull glances exhausted by debauchery are lowered before these piercing, flaming eyes; mocking blasphemers stand open-mouthed before these hymns.

And there is blood on their scourges.

A feeling of strange uneasiness filled the people at the sight of these strangers.

But it did not take long, however, before they shook off this impression. Some of them recognized a half-crazy shoemaker from Brescia among those who bore crosses, and immediately the whole mob through him became a laughingstock. Anyhow, it was something new, a distraction amid the everyday, and when the strangers marched toward the cathedral, everybody followed behind as they would have followed a band of jugglers or a tame bear.

But as they pushed their way forward they became embittered; they felt so matter-of-fact in comparison with the solemnity of these people. They understood very well, that those shoemakers and tailors had come here to convert them, to pray for them, and to utter the words which they did not wish to hear. There were two lean, gray-haired philosophers who had elaborated impiety into a system; they incited the people, and out of the malice of their hearts stirred their passions, so that with each step as they neared the church the attitude of the crowd became more threatening and their cries of anger wilder. It would not have taken much to have made them lay violent hands on those unknown flagellants. Not a hundred steps from the church entrance, the door of a tavern was thrown open, and a whole flock of carousers tumbled out, one on top of the other. They placed themselves at the head of the procession and led the way, singing and bellowing with grotesquely solemn gestures—all except one who turned handsprings right up the grass-grown stones of the church-steps. This, of course, caused laughter, and so all entered peacefully into the sanctuary.

It seemed strange to be here again, to pass through this great cool space, in this atmosphere pungent with the smell of old drippings from wax candles—across the sunken flag-stones which their feet knew so well and over these stones whose worn-down designs and bright inscriptions had so often caused their thoughts to grow weary. And while their eyes half-curiously, half-unwillingly sought rest in the gently subdued light underneath the vaults or glided over the dim manifoldness of the gold-dust and smoke-stained colors, or lost themselves in the strange shadows of the altar, there rose in their hearts a longing which could not be suppressed.

In the meantime those from the tavern continued their scandalous behavior upon the high altar. A huge, massive butcher among them, a young man, had taken off his white apron and tied it around his neck, so that it hung down his back like a surplice, and he celebrated mass with the wildest and maddest words, full of obscenity and blasphemy. An oldish little fellow with a fat belly, active and nimble in spite of his weight, with a face like a skinned pumpkin was the sacristan and responded with the most frivolous refrains. He kneeled down and genuflected and turned his back to the altar and rang the bell as though it were a jester’s and swung the censer round like a wheel. The others lay drunk on the steps at full length, bellowing with laughter and hiccoughing with drunkenness.

The whole church laughed and howled and mocked at the strangers. They called out to them to pay close attention so that they might know what the people thought of their God, here in Old Bergamo. For it was not so much their wish to insult God that made them rejoice in the tumult; but they felt satisfaction in knowing that each of their blasphemies was a sting in the hearts of these holy people.

They stopped in the center of the nave and groaned with pain, their hearts boiling with hatred and vengeance. They lifted their eyes and hands to God, and prayed that His vengeance might fall because of the mock done to Him here in His own house. They would gladly go to destruction together with these fool-hardy, if only He would show His might. Joyously they would let themselves be crushed beneath His heel, if only He would triumph, that cries of terror, despair, and repentance, that were too late, might rise up toward Him from these impious lips.

And they struck up a miserere. Every note of it sounded like a cry for the rain of fire that overwhelmed Sodom, for the strength which Samson possessed when he pulled down the columns in the house of the Philistines. They prayed with song and with words; they denuded their shoulders and prayed with their scourges. They lay kneeling row after row, stripped to their waist, and swung the sharp-pointed and knotted cords down on their bleeding backs. Wildly and madly they beat themselves so that the blood clung in drops on their hissing whips. Every blow was a sacrifice to God. Would that they might beat themselves in still another way, would that they might tear themselves into a thousand bloody shreds here before His eyes! This body with which they had sinned against His commandments had to be punished, tortured, annihilated, that He might see how hateful it was to them, that He might see how they became like unto dogs in order to please Him, lower than dogs before His will, the lowliest of vermin that ate the dust beneath the soles of His feet! Blow upon blow—until their arms dropped or until cramps turned them to knots. There they lay row on row with eyes gleaming with madness, with foam round their mouths, the blood trickling down their flesh.

And those who watched this suddenly felt their hearts throb, noticed how hotness rose into their cheeks and how their breathing grew difficult. It seemed as if something cold was growing out beneath their scalps, and their knees grew weak. It seized hold of them; in their brains was a little spot of madness which understood this frenzy.

To feel themselves the slaves of a harsh and powerful deity, to thrust themselves down before His feet; to be His, not in gentle piety, not in the inactivity of silent prayer, but madly, in a frenzy of self-humiliation, in blood, and wailing, beneath wet gleaming scourges—this they were capable of understanding. Even the butcher became silent, and the toothless philosophers lowered their gray heads before the eyes that roved about.

And it became quite still within the church; only a slight wave-like motion swept through the mob.

Then one from among the strangers, a young monk, rose up and spoke. He was pale as a sheet of linen, his black eyes glowed like coals, which are just going to die out, and the gloomy, pain-hardened lines around his mouth were as if carven in wood with a knife, and not like the folds in the face of a human being.

He raised his thin, sickly hands toward heaven in prayer, and the sleeves of his robe slipped down over his lean, white arms.

Then he spoke.

Of hell he spoke, that it is infinite as heaven is infinite, of the lonely world of torments which each one of the condemned must endure and fill with his wails. Seas of sulphur were there, fields of scorpions, flames

that wrap themselves round a person like a cloak, and silent flames that have hardened and plunged into the body like a spear twisted round in a wound.

It was quite still; breathlessly they listened to his words, for he spoke as if he had seen it with his own eyes, and they asked themselves: is he one of the condemned, sent up to us from the caverns of hell to bear witness before us?

Then he preached for a long time concerning the law and the power of the law, that its every title must be fulfilled, and that every transgression of which they were guilty would be counted against them by grain and ounce. “But Christ died for our sins, say ye, and we are no longer subject to the law. But I say unto you, hell will not be cheated of a single one of you, and not a single iron tooth of the torture wheel of hell shall pass beside your flesh. You build upon the cross of Golgotha, come, come! Come and look at it! I shall lead you straight to its foot. It was on a Friday, as you know, that they thrust Him out of one of their gates and laid the heavier end of a cross upon His shoulders. They made Him bear it to a barren and unfruitful hill without the city, and in crowds they followed Him, whirling up the dust with their many feet so that it seemed a red cloud was over the place. And they tore the garments from Him and bared His body, as the lords of the law have a malefactor exposed before the eyes of all, so that all may see the flesh that is to be committed to torture. And they flung Him on the cross and stretched Him out and they drove a nail of iron through each of His resistant hands and a nail through His crossed feet. With clubs they struck the nails till they were in to the heads. And they raised upright the cross in a hole in the ground, but it would not stand firm and straight, and they moved it from one side to the other, and drove wedges and posts all around, and those who did this pulled down the brims of their hats so that the blood from His hands might not drop into their eyes. And He on the cross looked down on the soldiers, who were casting lots for His unstitched garment and down on the whole turbulent mob, for whose sake He suffered, that they might be saved; and in all the multitude there was not one pitiful eye.

“And those below looked up toward Him, who hung there suffering and weak; they looked at the tablet above His head, whereon was written ‘King of the Jews,’ and they reviled Him and called out to Him: ‘Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ Then He, the only begotten Son of God was taken with anger, and saw that they were not worthy of salvation, these mobs that fill the earth. He tore free His feet over the heads of the nails, and He clenched His hands round the nails and tore them out, so that the arms of the cross bent like a bow. Then He leaped down upon the earth and snatched up His garment so that the dice rolled down the slope of Golgotha, and flung it round himself with the wrath of a king and ascended into heaven. And the cross stood empty, and the great work of redemption was never fulfilled. There is no mediator between God and us; there is no Jesus who died for us on the cross; there is no Jesus who died for us on the cross, there is no Jesus who died for us on the cross!”

He was silent.

As he uttered the last words he leaned forward over the multitude and with his lips and hands hurled the last words over their heads. A groan of agony went through the church, and in the corners they had begun to sob.

Then the butcher pushed forward with raised, threatening hands, pale as a corpse, and shouted: “Monk, monk, you must nail Him on the cross again, you must!” and behind him there was a hoarse, hissing sound: “Yea, yea, crucify, crucify Him!” And from all mouths, threatening, beseeching, peremptory, rose a storm of cries up to the vaulted roof: “Crucify, crucify Him!”

And clear and serene a single quivering voice: “Crucify Him!”

But the monk looked down over this wave of outstretched hands, upon these distorted faces with the dark openings of screaming lips, where rows of teeth gleamed white like the teeth of enraged beasts of prey, and in a moment of ecstasy he spread out his arms toward heaven and laughed. Then he stepped down, and his people raised their banners with the rain of fire and their empty black crosses, and crowded their way out of the church and again passed singing across the square and again through the opening of the tower-gate.

And those of Old Bergamo stared after them, as they went down the mountain. The steep road, lined by walls, was misty in the light of the sun setting beyond the plain, but on the red wall encircling the city the shadows of the great crosses which swayed from side to side in the crowd stood out black and sharply outlined.

Further away sounded the singing; one or another of the banners still gleamed red out of the new town’s smoke-blackened void; then they disappeared in the sun-lit plain.

THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ROSES

There should have been roses

Of the large, pale yellow ones.

And they should hang in abundant clusters over the garden-wall, scattering their tender leaves carelessly down into the wagon-tracks on the road: a distinguished glimmer of all the exuberant wealth of flowers within.

And they should have the delicate, fleeting fragrance of roses, which cannot be seized and is like that of unknown fruits of which the senses tell legends in their dreams.

Or should they have been red, the roses?

Perhaps.

They might be of the small, round, hardy roses, and they would have to hang down in slender twining

branches with smooth leaves, red and fresh, and like a salutation or a kiss thrown to the wanderer, who is walking, tired and dusty, in the middle of the road, glad that he now is only half a mile from Rome.

Of what may he be thinking? What may be his life?

And now the houses hide him, they hide everything on that side. They hide one another and the road and the city, but on the other side there is still a distant view. There the road swings in an indolent, slow curve down toward the river, down toward the mournful bridge. And behind this lies the immense Campagna. The gray and the green of such large plains.... It is as if the weariness of many tedious miles rose out of them and settled with a heavy weight upon one, and made one feel lonely and forsaken, and filled one with desires and yearning. So it is much better that one should take one's ease here in a corner between high garden-walls, where the air lies tepid and soft and still—to sit on the sunny side, where a bench curves into a niche of the wall, to sit there end gaze upon the shimmering green acanthus in the roadside ditches, upon the silver-spotted thistles, and the pale-yellow autumn flowers.

The roses should have been on the long gray wall opposite, a wall full of lizard holes and chinks with withered grass; and they should have peeped out at the very spot where the long, monotonous flatness is broken by a large, swelling basket of beautiful old wrought iron, a latticed extension, which forms a spacious balcony, reaching higher than the breast. It must have been refreshing to go up there when one was weary of the enclosed garden.

And this they often were.

They hated the magnificent old villa, which is said to be within, with its marble stair-cases and its tapestries of coarse weave; and the ancient trees with their proud large crowns, pines and laurels, ashes, cypresses, and oaks. During all the period of their growth they were hated with the hatred which restless hearts feel for that which is commonplace, trivial, uneventful, for that which stands still and therefore seems hostile.

But from the balcony one could at least range outside with one's eyes, and that is why they stood there, one generation after the other, and all stared into the distance, each one with pro and each one with his con. Arms adorned with golden bracelets have lain on the edge of the iron railing and many a silk-covered knee has pressed against the black arabesques, the while colored ribbons waved from all its points as signals of love and rendezvous. Heavy, pregnant housewives have also stood here and sent impossible messages out into the distance. Large, opulent, deserted women, pale as hatred... could one but kill with a thought or open hell with a wish!... Women and men! It is always women and men, even these emaciated white virgin souls which press against the black latticework like a flock of lost doves and cry out, "Take us!" to imagined, noble birds of prey.

One might imagine a *proverbe* here.

The scenery would be very suitable for a *proverbe*.

The wall there, just as it is; only the road would have to be wider and expand into a circular space. In its center there would have to be an old, modest fountain of yellowish tuff and with a bowl of broken porphyry. As figure for the fountain a dolphin with a broken-off tail, and one of the nostrils stopped up. From the other the fine jet of water rises. On one side of the fountain a semicircular bench of tuff and terracotta.

The loose, grayish white dust; the reddish, molded stone, the hewn, yellowish, porous tuff; the dark, polished porphyry, gleaming with moisture, and the living, tiny, silvery jet of water: material and colors harmonize rather well.

The characters: two pages.

Not of a definite, historical period, for the pages of reality in no way correspond with the pages of the ideal. The pages here, however, are pages such as dream in pictures and books. Accordingly it is merely the costume which has a historical effect.

The actress who is to represent the youngest of the pages wears thin silk which clings closely and is pale-blue, and has heraldic lilies of the palest gold woven into it. This and as much lace as can possibly be employed are the most distinctive feature of the costume. It does not aim at any definite century, but seeks to emphasize the youthful voluptuousness of the figure, the magnificent blond hair, and the clear complexion.

She is married, but it lasted only a year and a half, when she was divorced from her husband, and she is said to have acted in anything but a proper fashion towards him. And that may well be, but it is impossible to imagine anything more innocent in appearance than she. That is to say, it is not the gracious elemental innocence which has such attractive qualities; but it is rather the cultivated, mature innocence, in which no one can be mistaken, and which goes straight to the heart. It captivates one with all the power which something that has reached completion only can have.

The second actress in the *proverbe* is slender and melancholy. She is unmarried and has no past, absolutely none. There is no one who knows the least thing about her. Yet these finely delineated, almost lean limbs, and these amber-pale, regular features are vocal. The face is shaded by raven-black curls, and borne on a strong masculine neck. Its mocking smile, in which there is also hungry desire, allures. The eyes are unfathomable and their depths are as soft and luminous as the dark petals in the flower of the pansy.

The costume is of pale-yellow, in the manner of a corselet with wide, up-and-down stripes, a stiff ruff and buttons of topaz. There is a narrow frilled stripe on the edge of the collar, and also on the close-fitting sleeves. The trunks are short, wide-slashed, and of a dead-green color with pale purple in the slashes. The hose is gray.—Those of the blue page, of course, are pure white.—Both wear barrets.

Such is their appearance.

And now the yellow one is standing up on the balcony, leaning over the edge, the while the blue is sitting on the bench down by the fountain, comfortably leaning back, with his ring-covered hands clasped around one knee. He stares dreamily out upon the Campagna.

Now he speaks:

"No, nothing exists in the world but women!—I don't understand it... there must be a magic in the lines out of which they are created, merely when I see them pass: Isaura, Rosamond, and Donna Lisa, and the others.

When I see how their garment clings around their figure and how it drapes as they walk, it is as if my heart drank the blood out of all my arteries, and left my head empty and without thoughts and my limbs trembling and without strength. It is as though my whole being were gathered into a single, tremulous, uneasy breath of desire. What is it? Why is it? It is as if happiness went invisibly past my door, and I had to snatch it and hold it close, and make it my own. It is so wonderful—and yet I cannot seize it, for I cannot see it."

Then the other page speaks from his balcony:

"And if now you sat at her feet, Lorenzo, and lost in her thoughts she had forgotten why she had called you, and you sat silent and waiting, and her lovely face were bent over you further from you in the clouds of its dreams than the star in the heavens, and yet so near you that every expression was surrendered to your admiration, every beauty-engendered line, every tint of the skin in its white stillness as well as in its soft rosy glow—would it not then be as if she who is sitting there belonged to another world than the one in which you kneel in adoration! Would it not be as if hers were another world, as if another world surrounded her, in which her festively garbed thoughts are going out to meet some goal which is unknown to you? Her love is far away from all that is yours, from your world, from everything. She dreams of far distances and her desires are of far distances. And it seems as if not the slightest space could be found for you in her thoughts, however ardently you might desire to sacrifice yourself for her, your life, your all, to the end that that might be between her and you which is hardly a faint glimmer of companionship, much less a belonging together."

"Yes, you know that it is thus. But...." Now a greenish-yellow lizard runs along the edge of the balcony. It stops and looks about The tail moves....

If one could only find a stone...

Look out, my four-legged friend.

No, you cannot hit them, they hear the stone long before it reaches them. Anyhow he got frightened.

But the pages disappeared at the same moment.

The blue one had been sitting there so prettily. And in her eyes lay a yearning which was genuine and unconscious and in her movements a nervousness that was full of presentiment. Around her mouth was a faint expression of pain, when she spoke, and even more when she listened to the soft, somewhat low voice of the yellow page, which spoke to her from the balcony in words that were provocative and at the same time caressing, that had a note of mockery and a note of sympathy.

And doesn't it seem now as if both were still here!

They are there, and have carried on the action of the *proverbe*, while they were gone. They have spoken of that vague young love which never finds peace but unceasingly flits through all the lands of foreboding and through all the heavens of hope; this love that is dying to satisfy itself in the powerful, fervent glow of a single great emotion! Of this they spoke; the younger one in bitter complaint, the elder one with regretful tenderness. Now the latter said—the yellow one to the blue—that he should not so impatiently demand the love of a woman to capture him and hold him bound.

"For believe me," he said, "the love that you will find in the clasp of two white arms, with two eyes as your immediate heaven and the certain bliss of two lips—this love lies nigh unto the earth and unto the dust. It has exchanged the eternal freedom of dreams for a happiness which is measured by hours and which hourly grows older. For even if it always grows young again, yet each time it loses one of the rays which in a halo surround the eternal youth of dreams. No, you are happy."

"No, you are happy," answered the blue one, "I would give a world, were I as you are."

And the blue one rises, and begins to walk down the road to the Campagna, and the yellow one looks after him with a sad smile and says to himself: "No, he is happy!"

But far down the road the blue one turns round once more toward the balcony, and raising his barret calls: "No, you are happy!"

There should have been roses.

And now a breath of wind might come and shake a rain of rose-leaves from the laden branches, and whirl them after the departing page.

MRS. FONSS

In the graceful pleasure-gardens behind the Pope's ancient palace in Avignon stands a bench from which one can overlook the Rhone, the flowery banks of the Durance, hills and fields, and a part of the town.

One October afternoon two Danish ladies were seated on this bench, Mrs. Fonss, a widow, and her daughter Elinor.

Although they had been here several days and were already familiar with the view before them, they nevertheless sat there and marveled that this was the way the Provence looked.

And this really was the Provence! A clayey river with flakes of muddy sand, and endless shores of stone-gray gravel; pale-brown fields without a blade of grass, pale-brown slopes, pale-brown hills and dust-colored roads, and here and there near the white houses, groups of black trees, absolutely black bushes and trees. Over all this hung a whitish sky, quivering with light, which made everything still paler, still dryer and more wearily light; never a glimmer of luxuriant, satiated hues, nothing but hungry, sun-parched colors; not a sound in the air, not a scythe passing through the grass, not a wagon rattling over the roads; and the town stretching out on both sides was also as if built of silence with all the streets still as at noon time, with all the houses deaf and dumb, every shutter closed, every blind drawn, each and every one; houses that could neither see nor hear.

Mrs. Fonss viewed this lifeless monotony with a resigned smile, but it made Elinor visibly nervous; not actively nervous as in the case of annoyance, but mournful and weary, as one often becomes after many days of rain, when all one's gloomy thoughts seem to pour down upon one with the rain; or as at the idiotically consoling tick-tack of a clock, when one sits and grows incurably tired of one's self; or at watching the flowers of the wall-paper, when the same chain of worn-out dreams clanks about against one's will in the brain and the links are joined and come apart and in a stifling endlessness are united again. It actually had a physical effect upon her, this landscape, almost causing her to faint. To-day everything seemed to have conspired with the memories of a hope which was dead and of sweet and lively dreams which had become disagreeable and nauseous; dreams which caused her to redden when she thought of them and which yet she could not forget. And what had all that to do with the region here? The blow had fallen upon her far from here amid the surroundings of her home, by the edge of a sound with changing waters, under pale green beech-trees. Yet it hovered on the lips of every pale brown hill, and every green-shuttered house stood there and held silence concerning it.

It was the old sorrow for young hearts which had touched her. She had loved a man and believed in his love for her, and suddenly he had chosen some one else. Why? For what reason? What had she done to him? Had she changed? Was she no longer the same? And all the eternal questions over again. She had not said a word about it to her mother, but her mother had understood every bit of it, and had been very concerned about her. She could have screamed at this thoughtfulness which knew and yet should not have known; her mother understood this also, and for that reason they had gone traveling.

The whole purpose of the journey was only that she might forget.

Mrs. Fonss did not need to make her daughter feel uneasy by scrutinizing her face in order to know where her thoughts were. All she had to do was to watch the nervous little hand which lay beside her and with such futile despair stroked the bars of the bench; they changed their position every moment like a fever-patient tossing from side to side in his hot bed. When she did this and looked at the hand, she also knew how life-weary the young eyes were that stared out into the distance, how pain quivered through every feature of the delicate face, how pale it was beneath its suffering, and how the blue veins showed at the temples beneath the soft skin.

She was very sorry for her little girl, and would have loved to have had her lean against her breast, and to whisper down to her all the words of comfort she could think of, but she had the conviction that there were sorrows which could only die away in secret and which must not be expressed in loud words, not even between a mother and daughter. Otherwise some day under new circumstances, when everything is building for joy and happiness, these words may become an obstacle, something that weighs heavily and takes away freedom. The person who has spoken hears their whisper in the soul of the other, imagines them turned over and judged in the thoughts of the other.

Then, too, she was afraid of doing injury to her daughter if she made confidences too easy. She did not wish to have Elinor blush before her; she did want, however much of a relief it might be, to help her over the humiliation, which lies in opening the inmost recesses of one's soul to the gaze of another. On the contrary the more difficult it became for both, the more she was pleased, that the aristocracy of soul which she herself possessed was repeated in her young daughter in a certain healthy inflexibility.

Once upon a time—it was a time many, many years ago, when she herself had been an eighteen-year old girl, she had loved with all her soul, with every sense in her body, every living hope, every thought. It was not to be, could not be. He had had nothing to offer except his loyalty which would have involved the test of an endlessly long engagement, and there were circumstances in her home which could not wait. So she had taken the one whom they had given her, the one who was master over these circumstances. They were married, then came children: Tage, the son, who was with her in Avignon, and the daughter, who sat beside her, Everything had turned out so much better than she could have hoped for, both easier and more friendly. Eight years it lasted, then the husband died, and she mourned him with a sincere heart. She had learned to love his fine, thin-blooded nature which with a tense, egotistic, almost morbid love loved whatever belonged to it by ties of relationship or family, and cared nought for anything in all the great world outside, except for what they thought, what their opinion was—nothing else. After her husband's death she had lived chiefly for her children, but she had not devoted herself exclusively to them; she had taken part in social life, as was natural for so young and well-to-do a widow; and now her son was twenty-one years old and she lacked not many days of forty. But she was still beautiful. There was not a gray thread in her heavy dark-blonde hair, not a wrinkle round her large, courageous eyes, and her figure was slender with well-balanced fullness. The strong, fine lines of her features were accentuated by the darker more deeply colored complexion which the years had given her; the smile of her widely sweeping lips was very sweet; an almost enigmatical youth in the dewy luminosity of her brown eyes softened and mellowed everything again. And yet she also had the round fullness of cheek, the strong-willed chin of a mature woman.

"That surely is Tage coming," said Mrs. Fonss to her daughter when she heard laughter and some Danish exclamations on the other side of the thick hedge of hornbeam.

Elinor pulled herself together.

And it was Tage, Tage and Kastager, a wholesale merchant from Copenhagen, with his sister and daughter; Mrs. Kastager lay ill at home in the hotel.

Mrs. Fonss and Elinor made room for the two ladies; the men tried for a moment to converse standing, but were lured by the low wall of stone which surrounded the spot. They sat there and said only what was absolutely necessary, for the newcomers were tired from a little railway excursion they had taken into the Provence with its blooming roses.

"Hello!" cried Tage, striking his light trousers with the flat of his hand, "look!"

They looked.

Out in the brown landscape appeared a cloud of dust, over it a mantle of dust, and between the two they caught sight of a horse. "That's the Englishman, I told you about, who came the other day," said Tage, turning toward his mother.

“Did you ever see any one ride like that?” he asked, turning toward Kastager, “he reminds me of a gaucho.”

“Mazeppa?” said Kastager, questioningly.

The horseman disappeared.

Then they all rose, and set out for the hotel.

They had met the Kastagers in Belfort, and since they were pursuing the same itinerary through southern France and along the Riviera, they for the time being traveled together. Here in Avignon both families had made a halt; Kastager because his wife had developed a varicose vein, the Fonss’ because Elinor obviously needed a rest.

Tage was delighted at this living together. Day by day he fell more and more incurably in love with the pretty Ida Kastager. Mrs. Fonss did not especially like this. Though Tage was very self-reliant and mature for his age, there was no reason for a hasty engagement—and there was Mr. Kastager! Ida was a splendid little girl, Mrs. Kastager was a very well-bred woman of excellent family, and Kastager himself was capable, rich, and honest, but there was a hint of the absurd about him. A smile came upon people’s lips and a twinkle into their eyes when any one mentioned Mr. Kastager.

The reason for this was that he was full of fire and given to extraordinary enthusiasms; he was frankly ingenuous, boisterous, and communicative, and nowadays it requires a great deal of tact to be lavish with enthusiasm. But Mrs. Fonss could not bear the thought that Tage’s father-in-law should be mentioned with a twinkle in the eye and a smile round the mouth, and for that reason she exhibited a certain coldness toward the family to the great sorrow of the enamored Tage.

On the morning of the following day Tage and his mother had gone to look at the little museum of the town. They found the gate open, but the doors to the collection locked; ringing the bell proved fruitless. The gateway, however, gave admission to the not specially large court which was surrounded by a freshly whitewashed arcade whose short squat columns had black iron bars between them.

They walked about and looked at the objects placed along the wall: Roman sepulchral monuments, pieces of sarcophagi, a headless draped figure, the dorsal vertebra of a whale, and a series of architectural details.

On all the objects of interest there were fresh traces of the masons’ brushes.

By now they had come back to their starting point.

Tage ran up the stairs to see if there might not be people somewhere in the house, and Mrs. Fonss in the meantime walked up and down the arcade.

As she was on the turn toward the gate a tall man with a bearded, tanned face, appeared at the end of the passage directly in front of her. He had a guide-book in his hand; he listened for something, and then looked forward, straight at her.

The Englishman of yesterday immediately came to her mind.

“Pardon me?” he began interrogatively, and bowed.

“I am a stranger,” Mrs. Fonss replied, “nobody seems to be at home, but my son has just run upstairs to see whether....”

These words were exchanged in French.

At this moment Tage arrived. “I have been everywhere,” he said, “even in the living quarters, but didn’t find as much as a cat.”

“I hear,” said the Englishman, this time in Danish, “that I have the pleasure of being with fellow-countrymen.”

He bowed again and retreated a couple of steps, as if to indicate that he had merely said this to let them know that he understood what they were saying. Suddenly he stepped closer than before with an intent, eager expression on his face, and said to Mrs. Fonss, “is it possible that you and I are old acquaintances?”

“Are you Emil Thorbrogger?” exclaimed Mrs. Fonss, and held out her hand.

He seized it. “Yes, I am he,” he said gayly, “and you are she?”

His eyes almost filled with tears as he looked at her.

Mrs Fonss introduced Tage as her son.

Tage had never in his life heard mention of Thorbrogger, but that was not his thoughts; he thought only of the fact that this gaucho turned out to be a Dane; when a pause set in, and some one had to say something he could not help exclaiming, “and I who said yesterday that you reminded me of a gaucho!”

“Well,” replied Thorbrogger, “that wasn’t far from the truth; for twenty-one years I have lived in the plains of La Plata, and in those years certainly spent more time on horse-back than on foot.”

And now he had come back to Europe!

Yes, he had sold his land and his sheep and had come back to have a look around in the old world where he belonged, but to his shame he had to confess that he often found it very much of a bore to travel about merely for pleasure.

Perhaps, he was homesick for the prairies?

No, he had never had any special feeling for places and countries; he thought it was only his daily work which he missed.

In that way they went on talking for a while. At last the custodian appeared, hot and out of breath, with heads of lettuce under his arms and a bunch of scarlet tomatoes in his hand, and they were admitted into the small, stuffy collection of paintings, where they gained only the vaguest impression of the yellow thunder-clouds and black waters of old Vernet, but on the contrary told each other with considerable detail of their lives and the happenings during all the years since they had parted.

For it was he whom she had loved, at the time when she married another. In the days which now followed they were much together, and the others thinking that such old friends must have much to say to each other

left them often alone. In those days both soon noticed that however much they might have changed during the course of the years, their hearts had forgotten nothing.

Perhaps it was he who first became aware of this, for all the uncertainty of youth, its sentimentality and its elegiac mood came upon him simultaneously, and he suffered under it. It seemed out of place to the mature man, that he should so suddenly be robbed of his peace of life and the self-possession which he had acquired during the course of time, and he wanted his love to bear a different stamp, wished it to be graver, more subdued.

She did not feel herself younger, but it seemed to her as if a fountain of tears that had been obstructed and dammed had burst open again and begun to flow. There was great happiness and relief in crying, and these tears gave her a feeling of richness; it was as if she had become more precious, and everything had become more precious to her—in short it was a feeling of youth after all.

On an evening of one of these days Mrs. Fonss sat alone at home, Elinor had gone to bed early, and Tage had gone to the theater with the Kastagers. She had been sitting in the dull hotel-room and had dreamed in the half light of a couple of candles. At length her dreams had come to a stop after their incessant coming and going; she had grown tired, but with that mild and smiling weariness which wraps itself round us, when happy thoughts are falling asleep in our mind.

She could not go on sitting here, staring in front of her, the whole evening long without so much as a book. It was still over an hour before the theater let out. So she began to walk up and down the room, stood in front of the mirror, and arranged her hair.

She would go down into the reading-room, and look over the illustrated papers. At this time of the evening it was always empty there.

She threw a large black lace shawl over her head and went down.

The room was empty.

The small room, overfull with furniture, was brilliantly illuminated by half a dozen large gas-flames; it was hot and the air was almost painfully dry.

She drew the shawl down around the shoulders.

The white papers there on the table, the portfolios with their large gilt letters, the empty plush chairs, the regular squares of the carpet and the even folds of the rep curtains—all this looked dull under the strong light.

She was still dreaming, and dreaming she stood, and listened to the long-drawn singing of the gas-flames.

The heat was such as almost to make one dizzy.

To support herself she slowly reached out for a large, heavy bronze vase which stood on a bracket fixed in the wall, and grasped the flower-decorated edge.

It was comfortable to stand thus, and the bronze was gratefully cool to the touch of her hand. But as she stood thus, there came another feeling also. She began to feel a contentment in her limbs, in her body, because of the plastically beautiful position which she had assumed. She was conscious of how becoming it was to her, of the beauty which was hers at the moment, and even of the physical sensation of harmony. All this gathered in a feeling of triumph, and streamed through her like a strange festive exultation.

She felt herself so strong at this hour, and life lay before her like a great, radiant day; no longer like a day declining toward the calm, melancholy hours of dusk. It seemed to her like an open, wide-awake space of time, with hot pulses throbbing every second, with joyous light, with energy and swiftness and an infinity without and within. And she was thrilled with the fullness of life, and longed for it with the feverish eagerness with which a traveler sets out on a journey.

For a long time she stood thus, wrapped in her thoughts, forgetting everything around her. Then suddenly as if she heard the silence in the room and the long-drawn singing of the gas-flames, she let her hand drop from the vase and sat down by the table and began to turn over the leaves of a portfolio.

She heard steps, passing by the door, heard them turn back, and saw Thorbrogger enter.

They exchanged a few words but as she seemed occupied with the pictures, he also began to look at the magazines that lay in front of him. They, however, did not interest him very much for when a little later she looked up, she met his eyes which rested searchingly upon her.

He looked as if he were just about to speak, and there was a nervous, decided expression round his mouth, which told her so definitely what his words would be that she reddened.

Instinctively, as if she wished to hold back these words, she held out a picture across the table and pointed at some horsemen from the pampas, who were throwing lassoes over wild steers.

He was just about to make some jesting remark about the draftsman’s naive conception of the art of throwing a lasso. It was so enticingly easy to speak of this rather than of that which he had on his mind. Resolutely, however, he pushed the picture aside, leaned a little ways across the table and said,

“I have thought a great deal about you since we met again; I have always thought a great deal about you, both long ago in Denmark and over where I was. And I have always loved you, and if it sometimes seems to me that it is only now that I really love you since we have met again, it is not true, however great my love may be, for I have always loved you, I have always loved you. And if it should happen now that you would become mine—you cannot imagine what that would mean to me, if you, who were taken from me for so many years, were to come back.”

He was silent for a moment, then he rose, and came closer to her.

“Oh, do say a word! I am standing here talking blindly. I speak to you as to an interpreter, a stranger, who has to repeat what I am saying to the heart I am speaking to.. I don’t know... to stand here and weigh my words... I don’t know, how far or how near. I dare not put into words the adoration which fills me—or dare I?”

He let himself sink down on a chair by her side.

“Oh, if I might, if I didn’t have to be afraid—is it true! Oh, God bless you, Paula.”

“There is nothing now that need keep us apart any longer,” said she, with her hand in his, “whatever may happen I have the right to be happy once, to live fully in accordance with my being, my desire, and my dreams. I have never renounced. Even though happiness was not my share, I have never believed that life was nothing but grayness and duty. I knew that there are people who are happy.”

Silently he kissed her hand.

“I know,” she said sadly, “that those who will judge me least harshly will not envy me the happiness which I shall have in having your love, but they will also say that I should be satisfied.”

“But that would not be enough for me, and you have not the right to send me away.”

“No,” she said, “no.”

A little later she went upstairs to Elinor.

Elinor slept.

Mrs. Fonss sat down by her bed and looked at her pale child whose features she could only dimly distinguish under the faint yellow glow of the night lamp.

For Elinor’s sake they would have to wait. In a few days they would separate from Thorbrogger, go to Nice, and stay there by themselves. During the winter she would live only that Elinor might regain her health. But to-morrow she would tell the children what had happened and what was to be expected. However they might receive the news it was impossible for her to live with them day in, day out, and yet be almost separated from them by a secret like this. And they would need time to get used to the idea, because it would mean a separation between them, whether greater or smaller would depend on the children themselves. The arrangement of their lives in so far as it concerned her and him was to be left entirely to them. She would demand nothing. It was for them to *give*.

She heard Tage’s step in the sitting-room and went to him.

He was so radiant and at the same time so nervous that Mrs. Fonss knew something had happened, and she had an intuition of what it was.

He sought for an opening to unburden his heart and sat and talked absent-mindedly of the theater. Not until his mother went over to him and put her hand on his forehead, forcing him to look at her, was he able to tell her that he had wooed Ida Kastager and gained her “yes.”

They talked about it for a long time, but throughout Mrs. Fonss felt a coldness in whatever she said, which she could not overcome. She was afraid of being too sympathetic with Tage on account of her own emotion. Besides, in the uncertain state of her mind she was distrustful of the idea that there might be even the faintest shadow of an association between her kindness of to-night and what she was to tell to-morrow..

Tage, however, did not notice any coolness.

Mrs. Fonss did not sleep much that night; there were too many thoughts to keep her awake. She thought how strange it was that he and she should have met and that when they met they should love each other as in the old days.

It was long ago, especially for her; she was no longer, could no longer, be young. And this would show; and he would be thoughtful with her, and grow used to the fact that it was a long time since she was eighteen years old. But she felt young, she was so in many respects, and yet all the while she was conscious of her years. She saw it very clearly, in a thousand movements, in expressions and gestures, in the way in which she would respond to a hint, in the fashion in which she would smile at an answer. Ten times a day she would betray her age, because she lacked the courage to be outwardly as young as she was within.

And thoughts came and thoughts went, but through it all the same question always rose, as to what her children would say.

On the forenoon of the following day she put the answer to the test.

They were in the sitting-room.

She said that she had something important to tell them, something that would mean a great change in their lives, something that would be unexpected news to them. She asked them to listen as calmly as they could, and not to let themselves be carried away by the first impression into thoughtlessness. They must know that what she was about to tell them was definitely decided, and that nothing they might say could make her alter her decision.

“I am going to marry again,” she said, and told them of how she had loved Thorbrogger, before she had known their father; how she had become separated from him, and how they had now met again.

Elinor cried, but Tage had risen from his seat, utterly bewildered. He then went close to her, kneeled down before her, and seized her hand. Sobbing, half-stifled with emotion, he pressed it against his cheek with infinite tenderness, with an expression of helplessness in every line of his face.

“Oh, but mother, dearest mother, what have we done to you, have we not always loved you, have we not always, both when we were with you and when we were away from from you, wanted you as the best thing we possessed in the world? We have never known father except through you; it was you who taught us to love him, and if Elinor and I are so close to each other, is it not because day after day you always pointed out to each of us what was best in the other? And has it not been thus with every other person to whom we became attached, do we not owe everything to you? We owe everything to you, and we worship you, mother, if you only knew.... Oh, you cannot imagine, how much we want your love, want you beyond all bounds and limits, but there again you have taught us to restrain our love, and we never dare to come as close to your heart as we should like. And now you say that you are going to leave us entirely, and put us to one side. But that is impossible. Only one who wanted to do us the greatest harm in the world could do anything as frightful as that, and you don’t want to do us the greatest harm, you want only what is best for us—how can it then be possible? Say quickly that it is not true; say it is not true, Tage, it is not true, Elinor.”

“Tage, Tage, don’t be so distressed, and don’t make it so hard, both for yourself and us others.”

Tage rose.

“Hard,” he said, “hard, hard, oh were it nothing but that, but it is horrible—unnatural; it is enough to drive one insane, merely to think of it. Have you any idea of the things you make me think of? My mother loved by a strange man, my mother desired, held in the arms of another and holding him in hers. Nice thoughts for a son, worse than the worst insult—but it is impossible, must be impossible, must be! Are the prayers of a son to be as powerless as that! Elinor, don’t sit there and cry, come and help me beg mother to have pity on us.”

Mrs. Fonss made a restraining gesture with her hand and said: “Let Elinor alone, she is probably tired enough, and besides I have told you that nothing can be changed.”

“I wish I were dead,” said Elinor, “but, mother, everything that Tage has said is true, and it never can be right that at our age you should give us a step-father.”

“Step-father,” cried Tage, “I hope that he does not for one moment dare.... You are mad. Where he enters, we go out. There isn’t any power on earth that can force me into the slightest intimacy with that person. Mother must choose—he or we! If they go to Denmark after their marriage, then we are exiles; if they stay here, we leave.”

“And those are your intentions, Tage?” asked Mrs. Fonss.

“I don’t think you need doubt that; imagine the life. Ida and I are sitting out there on the terrace on a moonlit evening, and behind the laurel-bushes some one is whispering. Ida asks who is whispering, and I reply that it is my mother and her new husband.—No, no, I shouldn’t have said that; but you see the effect of it already, the pain it causes me, and you may be sure that it won’t help Elinor’s health either.”

Mrs. Fonss let the children go while she remained sitting here.

No, Tage was right, it had not been good for them. How far from her they had already gone in that short hour! How they looked at her, not like her children, but like their father’s! How quick they were to desert her as soon as they saw that not every motion of her heart was theirs! But she was not only Tage’s and Elinor’s mother alone; she was also a human being on her own account, with a life of her own and hopes of her own, quite apart from them. But she was, perhaps, not quite as young as she had believed herself to be. This had come to her in the conversation with her children. Had she not sat there, timid, in spite of her words; had she not almost felt like one who was trespassing upon the rights of youth? Were not all the exorbitant demands of youth and all its naive tyranny in everything they had said?—It is for us to love, life belongs to us, and your life it is but to exist for us.

She began to understand that there might be a satisfaction in being quite old; not that she wished it, but yet old age smiled faintly at her like a far-distant peace, coming after all the agitation of recent times, and now when the prospect of so much discord was so near. For she did not believe that her children would ever change their mind, and yet she had to discuss it with them over and over again before she gave up hope. The best thing would be for Thorbrogger to leave immediately. With his presence no longer here the children might be less irritable, and she could try to show them how eager she was to be as considerate as possible to them. In time the first bitterness would disappear, and everything... no, she did not believe, that everything would turn out well.

They agreed that Thorbrogger should leave for Denmark to arrange their affairs. For the time being they would remain here. It seemed, however, that nothing was gained by this. The children avoided her. Tage spent all his time with Ida or her father, and Elinor stayed all the time with the invalid, Mrs. Kastager. And when they happened to be actually together, the old intimacy, the old feeling of comfort, was gone. Where were the thousand subjects for conversation, and, when finally they found one, where was the interest in it? They sat there keeping up a conversation like people who for a while have enjoyed each other’s company, and now must part. All the thoughts of those who are about to leave are fixed on the journey’s end, and those who remain think only of settling hack into the daily life and daily routine, as soon as the strangers have left.

There was no longer any common interest in their life; all the feeling of belonging together had disappeared. They were able to talk about what they were going to do next week, next month, or even the month following, but it did not interest them as though it had to do with days out of their own lives. It was merely a time of waiting, which somehow or other had to be endured, for all three mentally asked themselves: And what then? They felt no solid foundation in their lives; there was no ground to build upon before this, which had separated them, was settled.

Every day that passed the children forgot more and more what their mother had meant to them, in the fashion in which children who believe themselves wronged will forget a thousand benefactions for the sake of one injustice.

Tage was the most sensitive of them, but also the one who was hurt most deeply, because he had loved most. He had wept through long nights because of his mother whom he could not retain in the way in which he wanted. There were times when the memory of her love almost deafened all other feelings in his heart. One day he even went to her and beseeched and implored her that she might belong to them, to them alone, and not to any other one, and the answer had been a “no.” And this “no” had made him hard and cold. At first he had been afraid of this coldness, because it was accompanied by a frightful emptiness.

The case with Elinor was different. In a strange way she had felt that it was an injustice toward her father, and she began to worship him like a fetish. Even though she but dimly remembered him, she recreated him for herself in most vivid fashion by becoming absorbed in everything she had ever heard about him. She asked Kastager about him and Tage, and every morning and night she kissed a medallion-portrait of his which belonged to her. She longed with a somewhat hysterical desire for some letters from him which she had left at home, and for things which had once belonged to him.

In proportion as the father in this way rose in her estimation, the mother sank. The fact that she had fallen in love with a man harmed her less in her daughter’s eyes; but she was no lenger the mother, the unfailing, the wisest, the supreme, most beautiful. She was a woman like other women; not quite, but just because not quite, it was possible to criticize and judge her and to find weaknesses and faults in her. Elinor was glad that she had not confided her unhappy love to her mother; but she did not know how much it was due to her

mother that she had not done so.

One day passed like another, and their life became more and more unendurable. All three felt that it was useless; instead of bringing them together, it only drove them further apart.

Mrs. Kastager had now recovered. Though she had not played an active part in anything that had happened, she knew more about the situation than any one else, because everything had been told her. One day she had a long talk with Mrs. Fonss who was glad that there was some one who would quietly listen to her plans for the future. In this conversation Mrs. Kastager suggested that the children go with her to Nice, while they sent for Thorbrogger to come to Avignon, so that they might be married. Kastager could stay on as witness.

Mrs. Fonss wavered a little while longer, for she had been unable to discover what her children's reaction would be. When they were told, they accepted it with proud silence, and when they were pressed for answer, they merely said that they would, of course, adjust themselves to whatever she decided to do.

So things turned out as Mrs. Kastager had proposed. She said good-by to the children, and they left; Thorbrogger came, and they were married.

Spain became their home; Thorbrogger chose it for the sake of sheep-farming.

Neither of them wished to return to Denmark.

And they lived happily in Spain.

She wrote several times to her children, but in their first violent anger that she had left them, they returned the letters. Later they regretted it; they were unable, however, to admit this to their mother and to write to her; for that reason all communication between them ceased. But now and then in round about ways they heard about each other's lives.

For five years Thorbrogger and his wife lived happily, but then she suddenly fell ill. It was a disease whose course ran swiftly and whose end was necessarily fatal. Her strength dwindled hourly, and one day when the grave was no longer far away she wrote to her children.

"Dear children," she wrote, "I know that you will read this letter, for it will not reach you until after my death. Do not be afraid, there are no reproaches in these lines; would that I might make them bear enough love.

"When people love, Tage and Elinor, little Elinor, the one who loves most must always humble himself, and therefore I come to you once more, as in my thoughts I shall come to you every hour as long as I am able. One who is about to die, dear children, is very poor; I am very poor, for all this beautiful world, which for so many years has been my abundant and kindly home, is to be taken from me. My chair will stand here empty, the door will close behind me, and never again will I set my foot here. Therefore I look at everything with the prayer in my eye that it shall hold me in kind memory. Therefore I come to you and beg that you will love me with all the love which once you had for me; for remember that not to be forgotten is the only part in the living world which from now on is to be mine; just to be remembered, nothing more.

"I have never doubted your love; I knew very well that it was your great love, that caused your great anger; had you loved me less, you would have let me go more easily. And therefore I want to say to you, that should some day it happen that a man bowed down with sorrow come to your door to speak with you concerning me, to talk about me to relieve his sorrow, then remember that no one has loved me as he has, and that all the happiness which can radiate from a human heart has come from him to me. And soon in the last great hour he will hold my hand in his when the darkness comes, and his words will be the last I shall hear....

"Farewell, I say it here, but it is not the farewell which will be the last to you; it I will say as late as I dare, and all my love will be in it, and all the longings for so many, many years, and the memories of the time when you were small, and a thousand wishes and a thousand thanks. Farewell Tage, farewell Elinor, farewell until the last farewell.

"YOUR MOTHER."

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